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    IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR TENNESSEE
                   FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT
 2
                      NASHVILLE DIVISION
 3
    JANE DOE,
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           Plaintiff,
                                          No. 3:20-CV-01023
 5
    v.
                                          Jury Demand
    THE METROPOLITAN
                                          Judge Trauger
    GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND
                                          Magistrate Judge
 7
    DAVIDSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE
                                          Holmes
    AND DR. ADRIENNE BATTLE
                                          Lead Case
           Defendants.
 9
    DR. LILY MORENO LEFFLER,
10
            Plaintiff,
11
    v.
12
    THE METROPOLITAN
    GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND
13
    DAVIDSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE,
    AND DR. ADRIENNE BATTLE
1 4
            Defendants.
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16
    DR. JAMES BAILEY,
    DR. PIPPA MERIWETHER, and
17
    DR. DAMON CATHEY,
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            Plaintiffs,
    v.
19
    METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT
20
    OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON
    COUNTY, TENNESSEE and
21
    DR. ADRIENNE BATTLE,
2.2
              Defendants.
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24
    The Deposition of: MARY ELLEN ZANDER
                           May 4, 2022
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               The deposition of Mary Ellen Zander was
    taken by counsel for the Plaintiffs, by notice, in
 2
    Nashville, Tennessee, on May 4, 2022, pursuant to the
    provisions of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
 3
               All formalities as to notice, caption,
    certificate, reading and signing of the deposition
 4
    are not waived. All objections, except as to the
    form of the questions, are reserved to the hearing.
 5
 6
    APPEARANCES:
 7
    For the Plaintiffs:
 8
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       Dr. Lily Leffler
       Dr. Pippa Meriwether
       Jane Doe
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1 MARY ELLEN ZANDER, 2 called as a witness and, having been first duly 3 sworn, was deposed as follows: 4 EXAMINATION BY MS. STEINER: 5 Q. Could you please state your full name for 6 the record? 7 Mary Ellen Zander, is my maiden name. just recently got married, so it's Mary Ellen Munoz. 8 I'm just in the process of getting it all changed. 10 And how do you spell your last name? Q. 11 Α. The new last name? 12 Ο. Yes. 13 Α. M-U-N-O-Z. 1 4 Q. Congratulations. 15 Thank you. Α. 16 Q. And what is your home address? 17 Α. Nashville. 18 Q. How long have you lived there? 19 Α. Not quite a year yet. 20 Q. Are you buying? 21 Α. Say that again. 2.2 Q. Are you leasing or are you buying? 23 No. We own. Α. 24 Own it? Do you have any plans of moving Q. 25 in the near future?

1 Α. Not that I'm aware of. 2 Do you have any plans of leaving your job 3 at Metro Schools in the near future? 4 Α. No. 5 So when we try this case on December 6th, 6 if I issue a subpoena, I can find you either at 7 Metro schools or at ______, correct? 8 Α. Yes. Okay. Now, have you ever given a 10 deposition before? 11 Α. Yes. 12 Q. How many times? 13 Half dozen at least. Α. Were they in discrimination cases? 1 4 Ο. I can't remember if all of them were 15 16 discrimination cases. No. They were not all 17 discrimination cases. 18 Q. Were they cases that involved Metro 19 schools? 20 Α. No, not all of them. I've only been to 21 one deposition involving Metro schools. 2.2 Q. Which one was that? 23 Last week. Α. 24 What was the name of the case? 0. 25 George Brooks. Α.

- Q. Okay. With an S on the end of Brooks?
- A. Yes.

- Q. And what was that case about?
- A. He -- I believe he is filing a claim

 against the district, some kind of timing issue with

 employment action.
 - O. Is it a discrimination case?
 - A. I don't believe so.
 - Q. Did he have a contract with the district?
- 10 A. He was a teacher in the district.
- 11 Q. Was he nonrenewed?
- 12 A. He was terminated or he resigned in lieu
 13 of being terminated.
- Q. Did he sue saying that it was a wrongful resignation -- termination?
- A. He resigned, so I can't tell you exactly
 what the suit was for.
- 18 O. Is it in federal court?
- 19 A. I don't know.
- 20 O. Is it in state court?
- A. I did a local deposition last week. I
 don't believe I understand whether it's in federal
 or state at this point.
- Q. What were you questioned about?
- 25 A. I am the employee relations director, and

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I was asked about documents and basically the letters recommending his termination, so it was regarding his termination from the district.

Q. And did he claim he was terminated
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- wrongfully?
- A. Not that I'm aware of.

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- Q. So he filed a lawsuit and you're the employee relations director and you testified last week, you don't know what it was about?
- 10 A. I'm not sure exactly what it was about. I
 11 just --
 - Q. What do you think it was about?
 - A. I knew it had to do with his separation from the district, but I started in 2018, his case originated in 2017, I was just at the tail end of the situation with Mr. Brooks.
- Q. So when did you start with the district in 2018?
- 19 A. June 22nd, 2018.
- Q. Okay. Tell me a little bit about yourself. Are you from Davidson County?
- A. I was born and raised in Torrington,
 Connecticut, moved to Tennessee in 2000 with my
 husband. He passed away.
- 25 Q. Okay.

- A. I moved out to South Carolina in 2008, returned to Tennessee in 2018.
- Q. Did you have any HR experience before you went to work for Metro schools?
 - A. Yes.
- O. How?

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- A. I was -- worked for Walmart prior to coming to Metro schools. I was a market human resource manager for Walmart. I handled the Charleston market, basically it was about 16 stores that I was the market HR manager for, for Walmart.
 - Prior to that, I worked for a Tennessee organization, SMS Holdings.
- Q. How did you spell that?
 - A. SMS Holdings.
- 16 Q. Okay.
- 17 A. I was director of HR services.
- 18 | O. And what before that?
- 19 A. I was a personnel and payroll manager for
 20 Larc, L-A-R-C. It was a not-for-profit organization
 21 that supported people with disabilities in
 22 Connecticut. That was prior to moving down here.
- Q. What is your educational background?
- A. I have a bachelor's of science in early childhood education and family studies.

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1
         Q.
              Were you going to be a teacher?
 2
              I actually did teach a couple of years
 3
    after college.
 4
              Did you teach in Connecticut?
 5
         Α.
              Yes.
 6
              Okay. Did you have a license to teach in
         Ο.
 7
    Connecticut?
              I was not certified. I did preschool.
 8
              Did you need a license to do preschool
         Ο.
10
    then in Connecticut?
11
         Α.
              No.
12
         0.
              Did you try to get a license in
13
    Connecticut?
1 4
         Α.
              No.
15
              You just wanted to teach preschool?
         0.
              That's what I went to school for and
16
         Α.
17
    that's what I did for about two years.
18
         Q.
               Two years. Okay. Are you certified by
19
    any agencies like SHRM?
20
               I had a senior HR professional
21
    certification, but it lapsed. I got it in 2006, and
2.2
    I think in 2018, I did not renew it.
23
              Do you have any other certifications?
         Q.
24
         Α.
              No.
25
              Did you receive any training on HR?
         Q.
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- A. On-the-job training.
- Q. Did you receive any specialized training when you went to work for Metro schools?
- A. The training that they put you through in terms of sexual harassment and policies and that kind of stuff. Some one-on-one training with the interim director.
 - Q. And who was the interim direct?
 - A. When I took over, it was Frank Young.
- Q. What month did you go to work for Metro schools in 2018?
- 12 A. June.

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- Q. Who was the HR director before you?
- 14 A. The interim director was Mr. Young. Prior 15 to that was Scott Lindsay.
- Q. Who was the employee relations director before you; was that Mo Carrasco?
- A. No. I never met Mo, so I don't know what

 his role -- but Scott Lindsay was the prior -- I

 think his title was executive director at the time.
- Q. Did you have any discussions with Mr. Lindsay about your job?
- A. No. He wasn't there when I got there.
- Q. Did you know -- when you got there, did anyone at Metro schools tell you about the working

environment that you were going into?

1 4

- A. I think that in the interview process I was told that there were issues ongoing, but I don't know that anybody could have prepared me for everything that was going on at the time I arrived.
- Q. Did anyone tell you there were multiple discrimination claims against the district and that -- did anyone tell you that?
 - A. I don't remember anybody telling me that.
- Q. Did anyone tell you that there was an atmosphere of fear of retaliation that existed?
 - A. I don't know that anybody told me that.
- Q. Did you know that Scott Lindsay believed that the employees at Metro schools were petrified for their jobs if they had to come in and testify or were questioned about discrimination or retaliation claims?
 - A. I don't know what Scott Lindsay thought.
- Q. Did anyone at Metro schools ever tell you that a fear of that nature existed?
- 21 A. I don't know that anybody ever told me 22 that.
- Q. So then my next question is this. Do you know of anything that was done by Metro schools to correct any sort of fear?

- A. I can't speak to what others have done regarding that here.
- Q. I want to know what you know have done -has occurred. What do you have knowledge of in
 terms of Metro schools doing anything to correct
 this fear of retaliation that existed down there
 when you became the employee relations director?

MR. FOX: Objection to the form.

THE WITNESS: The only thing that we do is on a case-by-case basis. If people have concerns, then we ensure them that we will do everything that we can to prevent retaliation, and if retaliation occurs, it's subject to corrective or disciplinary action.

15 BY MS. STEINER:

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Q. When you came in as an employee relations director for Metro schools, if there was this fear out there that was so prevalent that Scott Lindsay even swore under oath that people were scared for their jobs if they gave evidence or gave statements in a case, should that have been brought to your attention?

MR. FOX: Objection to the form.

THE WITNESS: I don't know. I don't know that people would share preconceived perceptions. I

1 don't know. I think you have a misunderstanding of

2 | my role. Employee relations isn't -- I oversee

3 | harassment, discrimination, any protected class

4 | issues, but we don't always get involved in the

5 day-to-day cultural issues.

BY MS. STEINER:

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Q. Do you not agree that if the employees -do you investigate harassment and discrimination
claims?

A. Yes.

- Q. Would you not agree that if the employees you were questioning about whether or not there's been harassment or discrimination have a fear of retaliation, it would affect your investigation?
- A. Do I believe it would affect my investigation? I would assure them that I would do my best to protect them from retaliation.
 - O. And what would that be?
- A. Well, when we do reporting, we report to the level up over, so like the leadership is aware of the situation, the individual is given our contact information and they can contact us if anything happens so that we can address it as it occurs.
 - Q. Do you ever do anything pre-protection?

If someone comes to you, for instance, Dr. Battle, and says, I think I'm going to be retaliated against by Dr. Battle because of what I did to her brother, having to discipline her brother, what would you do to set up as a precautionary measure to make sure that doesn't occur?

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- A. Well, that's a -- Dr. Bailey never came to
 me and said that, so I was not aware of anything
 like that. It depends on the situation. If
 somebody files a complaint and they work closely
 with that individual on a daily basis, we might find
 it appropriate to put somebody on an administrative
 leave until the situation can be thoroughly
 investigated and work towards a resolution.
 - Q. Any other options that you would have out there to protect someone from retaliation?
 - A. At times, I think it's been known to separate the individual. Even if they return to work, we can restrict interaction between individuals. If there was an issue involving Dr. Battle, it would not be my department that would handle that. That would be outsourced to a third-party investigator.
 - Q. And in your time at Metro schools, do you know of any outsourcing of any complaints of

retaliation by Dr. Battle that were outsourced?

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- A. I don't know for certain. I can't remember.
- Q. When you say administrative leave or separate the individual, who was placed on administrative leave, the harasser or the person who is claiming harassment?
 - A. The person who the claim is made against.
- Q. Okay. And when you separate the people, how do you do that, who do you move, do you move one, do you move both or what?
- A. It depends on the circumstances. If the person that files the complaint is requesting to be moved to somewhere else or reassigned, then otherwise we would move the person the claim was filed against. It might be temporary. It might be a permanent reassignment, depending on the circumstances or situation.
 - Q. Can you tell me how many employees you've actually placed on administrative leave due to a complaint being filed against them, since you've been the employee relations director?
- A. I can't give you a number exactly. It's been many.
- Q. Meaning it's over like 20?

A. Yes.

1 4

2.2

- Q. Okay.
 - A. But people go on administrative leave for more than harassment or discrimination claims. If there is an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child, that would warrant administrative leave, so there's a lot of different things that would warrant administrative leave.
 - Q. I wanted to limit it to discrimination claims, retaliation claims. How many individuals have you placed on administrative leave due to an administrative -- due to a discrimination or retaliation claim?
 - A. I cannot recall that number. I mean, I've been there since 2018, so I can't --
 - Q. Have you placed anyone on administrative leave due to a harassment complaint?
 - A. Yes. I can remember at least one.
- 19 Q. And who was that?
 - A. It was just recently. A teacher was alleged to have sexually harassed another teacher.
 - Q. Okay. Besides that one, can you remember or recall any time that you have actually placed an employee on administrative leave due to a discrimination or retaliation claim?

- A. I can't remember. Somebody -- that was the most recent.
- Q. Now, if a -- how many employees report to you?
 - A. How many employees in my department report to me? Four.
 - Q. And who are they?

1 4

2.1

- A. Denetra Batey. (Court reporter asks for clarification) D-E-N-E-T-R-A, B-A-T-E-Y. Wyntress, W-Y-N-T-R-E-S-S Patterson. Frank Young and Barbara Biggers-Matthews, Biggers, hyphen, Matthews.
 - Q. And what are they positions?
- A. Denetra and Wyntress are employee relations managers. Mr. Young is the legal liaison. He is an attorney. And Ms. Biggers-Matthews is the admin assistant for a department.
- Q. Okay. So if someone brings a complaint of retaliation or fear of retaliation to either Ms.

 Batey or Ms. Patterson, should they bring that to your attention?
- A. We discuss our cases weekly. So I might be aware, depending on if it's a regular teacher or a paraprofessional, maybe not, but if it's somebody like a principal or higher, I would be made aware.
- Q. Okay. Were you made aware of the fact

that Mr. James Bailey made a complaint of fear of retaliation to Ms. Batey in, I believe April of 2018 -- of 2020?

- A. I don't remember that specifically.
- Q. If Dr. Bailey had gone to Ms. Batey and said, I'm petrified that I'm going to be retaliated against by Dr. Battle because she is now the director of schools and I think she is out to get me because of my discipline of her brother, what should Ms. Batey should have done?
- A. She would have raised the concern to me and we would have raised it to the chief human resources office on guidance how to handle it.
 - Q. And was that ever raised with you?
- A. I think I was aware of it, I just don't remember specifically the timing of any of that.
- Q. You were aware of the fact that Dr. Bailey
 had a fear of retaliation when Dr. Battle became
 director of schools?
 - A. I don't know exactly what Dr. Bailey was afraid of.
- Q. But you had knowledge of something going on, correct?
- A. Yes. That might be more accurate. I knew something was going on, but I didn't know

specifically what was going on.

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- And when you knew something was going on, did you have a job duty for inquiring as to what was going on?
- Like I said, if the allegation was made Α. against Dr. Battle, it would had to have been outsourced to a third party.
- 0. And would it have been outsourced immediately to the third party?
- Depending on the statement. If something had occurred or if it was in anticipation that something would occur.
- If it's an anticipation that something Ο. would occur, what happens?
 - I can't speak to that. It depends on the circumstances or situation.
- 17 Okay. Here's the circumstance. Q.
- 18 Dr. Bailey is principal at White's Creek, he has a 19 fear that Dr. Battle is going to retaliate against 20 him because of his discipline of her brother and he
- 21 brings that to your department, what happens?
- We have to ask for specifics on what 23 grounds and whatever, but then again, if it was against Dr. Battle, it would have to be looked into by somebody outside of our organization.

1 Q. Would you agree that if -- your department 2 does have the ability to protect employees from retaliation, correct? 3 4 What do you mean, protect? 5 Ο. Stop retaliation. If it's within the school or within the 6 work environment, yes. We would be able to work 7 8 with leadership to restrict interaction and take appropriate action against somebody who is found to 10 have retaliated. If it's something that happens 11 outside of the school boundaries, we have very 12 limited ability to -- we would recommend that they go to the authorities if there was a situation 13 1 4 outside of the school environment. 15 Can you tell me everything that Metro 16 schools did to protect Dr. Bailey from retaliation 17 by Dr. Battle? 18 I have -- I can't speak to that. 19 MR. FOX: Objection to the form. 20 BY MS. STEINER: Can you tell me anything Metro schools did 2.1 22 to protect Dr. Bailey from retaliation from Dr. 23 Battle?

THE WITNESS:

MR. FOX: Objection to the form.

I can't answer that

2.4

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    question. I don't know.
 2.
    BY MS. STEINER:
 3
              Now, when you came here for your
 4
    deposition today, did you know it was for a lawsuit
 5
    where Dr. Bailey's claiming he lost his job or he
    was retaliated against because of his actions
 7
    against Dr. Battle's brother; did you know that?
 8
              I knew that you were the attorney for
    multiple individuals. I didn't realize it was going
10
    to be regarding Dr. Bailey.
11
              Did you know Dr. Bailey was one of the
12
    individuals?
13
              Yes, I did.
         Α.
1 4
              Well, when you knew that, did you go back
15
    to look to see whether or not he had filed any
16
    charge of retaliation?
17
              No, I did not.
         Α.
18
              Okay. Besides Dr. Bailey, can you tell me
19
    anyone else who has made any sort of charge of
20
    retaliation against Adrienne Battle?
2.1
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
2.2
              THE WITNESS: Can you ask that question
23
    again?
2.4
    BY MS. STEINER:
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              Who else has made a charge of retaliation
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- or discrimination against Adrienne Battle that you know of?
 - A. I'm not certain.

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- Q. Who do you think may have made a charge of retaliation or discrimination against Adrienne Battle?
 - A. I don't know that I'm comfortable answering that question, I don't know that I know.
 - Q. If you have any idea you need to answer my question today.
- MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
- 12 THE WITNESS: I believe that there is 13 other named people and -- that I was made aware of 1 4 that this might be regarding, involved Pippa 15 Meriwether, Damon Cathey, Lily Leffler. Other than 16 that, I don't know if they specifically had claimed 17 discrimination against Dr. Battle or not. I just 18 knew that those were also other folks that you 19 represented.
- 20 BY MS. STEINER:
- Q. Anyone else?
- 22 A. Not that I can think of.
- Q. Now, if someone comes in to the employee relations department and says I think I'm going to be retaliated against, does your department have a

1 job duty, an obligation to question them about why? 2. Α. Yes. 3 And do you keep notes of that? 0. 4 Yes, we would. 5 So if Dr. Bailey were to go to Ms. Batey Q. 6 and say I think I'm being retaliated against, she 7 would have a job duty for keeping notes and asking 8 him why, correct? Α. Yes. 10 Okay. And she would have a job duty and 11 an obligation to report that to you in your weekly 12 meeting, correct? 13 She would raise that, yes. 1 4 And when that's reported to you, do you 0. 15 also question Ms. Batey about what's been done with 16 regard to his fear of retaliation? 17 Can you ask that again? Α. 18 When that is brought to your knowledge, 19 brought to you that Dr. Bailey is in fear of 20 retaliation, what do you do? 2.1 MR. FOX: Objection to the form. 2.2 THE WITNESS: I think we would raise that

THE WITNESS: I think we would raise that concern and raise that concern with the chief human resource officer at that time.

Q. And who was that?

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2.4

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1
         Α.
              We've had several. I believe it was
 2
    Dr. Barnes.
 3
              Did you raise that with Dr. Barnes?
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
 4
              THE WITNESS: I believe we did.
 5
 6
    BY MS. STEINER:
 7
              And do you keep notes of raising these
 8
    issues, what you've raised with Dr. Barnes?
 9
              THE WITNESS: Not necessarily, unless we
10
    were discussing next steps or whatever, I would take
11
    notes.
12
              So then you did not -- did you discuss
13
    next steps with regard to Dr. Bailey and his fear of
    retaliation?
1 4
15
              I don't remember having that discussion.
16
              Can you tell me anything that was done to
         Q.
17
    protect Dr. Bailey from retaliation?
18
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
19
              THE WITNESS: I cannot recall what steps
20
    were taken with Dr. Bailey.
    BY MS. STEINER:
2.1
2.2
              Okay. And I assume you have no
23
    investigative notes or no file open on Dr. Bailey's
2.4
    fear of retaliation?
25
              I don't have anything that I can remember.
```

- Q. Okay. So is it correct then that a file was not even opened on Dr. Bailey's statements that he had a fear of retaliation?
- A. I don't know that that would be true. I don't know what Ms. Batey kept.
 - Q. Okay. Do you know what a nonrenewal is?
- 7 A. Yes.

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- Q. What is it?
 - A. It would be a nonrenewal -- are you talking in terms of a teacher or are you talking in terms of a principal?
- 12 Q. Principal.
 - A. So principals have a contract that is an annual contract, and it's up for renewal every year, so if they choose not to renew a principal contract, that's at the discretion of the director of schools.
- 17 Q. Is a nonrenewal different than a transfer?
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. Okay. Do you know what a transfer is?
 - A. Yes. It's a very broad term. Transfer would mean, you could transfer to another position at another school, you transfer to a position of equal stature at another location. People transfer and get promotions, people transfer and take demotions.

Q. If it's to a lower position with lower pay, is that considered a demotion?

1 4

2.2

- A. It would be. But the -- if the principal is a tenured teacher, the position that they are guaranteed within the district would be that of a tenured teacher. There is no guarantee of placement as a principal if the contract is nonrenewed.
- Q. Now, if a contract is not renewed, that means that they don't have the position with Metro schools, correct? That's different than a transfer?
- A. The -- if the principal position was nonrenewed, they would not have a principal position, but if they were tenured, they would be guaranteed no less than a teaching position within the district.
- Q. And when they are told that their contract is being nonrenewed or they're not going to be in that position again, does the person telling them that have a duty for telling them whether or not they're tenured or not tenured and whether or not they're going to be transferred into another position?
- A. I don't have those conversations. I don't know what goes on in those conversations. I mean,

 if you want me to speculate, I can speculate on what

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1
    would take place in those conversations.
 2.
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
 3
    BY MS. STEINER:
              What would you expect? You're the
 4
         0.
    employee relations director, what would you -- how
 5
    do you train the individuals who are engaging in
 7
    these nonrenewals and terminations, how do you -- do
 8
    you train them to tell the employees what's going
    on?
              I don't train those individuals.
10
11
    party to that process. That is handled by a
12
    different leg of HR.
              Okay. So then do you have a job duty for
13
         Ο.
1 4
    understanding and administering nonrenewals and
15
    transfers and demotions?
16
         Α.
              That is not -- that does not fall under my
17
    job duties.
18
              Okay. Did you know that Dr. Battle did
19
    nonrenew Dr. Bailey's contract?
20
         Α.
              I understood that it was Dr. Sharon
21
    Griffin that made the recommendation to nonrenew
2.2
    Dr. Bailey's contract. Like I said, I wasn't party
23
    to those conversations. And then I believe it was
```

Did you know that within weeks of coming

supported by Dr. Battle.

Q.

24

```
1
    in your office and claiming he had a fear of
 2
    retaliation, that he had lost his job as principal?
 3
              Say that again.
              Did you know that within weeks of coming
 4
    into your office to complain and to alert your
 5
 6
    office of his fear of retaliation, he lost his job
 7
    as principal?
              I don't know the timeline. Like I said, I
 8
    wasn't personally involved in that situation, but it
10
    could have been weeks. I don't know. You're asking
11
    me to speculate.
12
              Actually, I'm not. As the head of
         Ο.
13
    employee relations, you're the one who is
1 4
    responsible for the department investigating
15
    complaints of retaliation, correct?
16
              If they are based on a protected class,
         Α.
17
    yes.
18
         Q.
              What about based on whistleblower
19
    activity?
20
         Α.
              We've been asked to look into some of
21
    those situations.
2.2
         Q.
              And who asked you to look into those?
23
         Α.
              My boss.
24
              Who --
         0.
25
              It depends. I have four different chief
         Α.
```

- human resources officers, so it could have been -
 or Sharon Pertiller was my boss at one point. So if

 I had been asked to look into something that

 normally wouldn't fall into our realm, then I would

 do that.
 - Q. So whistleblower retaliation normally does not fall within your realm?
 - A. I can't recall, other than one case that I looked into, that they alleged retaliation due to them raising concerns or sharing information, that I looked into.
 - Q. So then, in general, retaliation for whistleblower activity is not typically handled by your department?
 - A. Harassment, discrimination, retaliation for protected class issues would be covered under our department. If that was raised to us -- but, again, it depends on who the subject is. If the subject is someone within the HR department or the director of schools, would have to outsource that.
 - Q. Let's go back. My question to you is a little different. Does your department -- is your department responsible for complaints of retaliation for whistleblower activity?
- 25 A. I would say yes.

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2.4

- Q. So it doesn't have to be referred to you for -- from Chris Barnes or someone else, your department is responsible for that when an employee walks in and tells you they are being retaliated against for whistleblower, correct?
- A. I don't know that any employee that walks in and says they're being retaliated says it's for a whistleblower. They would give us other reasons. I think the only people that use the whistleblower terms are people like yourself. So I don't know that an employee would come in and say that because I blew a whistle, they would raise concerns. We would know the specifics of why they felt they were being retaliated against.
 - Q. Do you understand what a whistleblower claim is?
- 17 A. I do.

1 4

- Q. Okay. And do you know that that includes such things as what Dr. Bailey did when he disciplined Coach Battle for beating up a parent and mishandling funds?
- MR. FOX: Objection to --
- 23 BY MS. STEINER:
- Q. Do you understand that a whistleblower
 claim would protect Dr. Bailey from retaliation for

1 doing that? 2. MR. FOX: Objection to the form. 3 THE WITNESS: I believe that if that was 4 the purpose or the -- if the person was being 5 disciplined based solely on that, then it would be 6 supported as a whistleblower, but if there are other factors involved that resulted in an employment 7 8 action, it would be considered, but they would still be subject to the same terms and conditions of 10 employment if say their performance wasn't where it 11 was supposed to be. Say the school wasn't 12 performing the way it was supposed to be, et cetera, 13 et cetera. It doesn't protect them from not doing 1 4 the things they are supposed to do in their role or 15 capacity. BY MS. STEINER: 16 17 Okay. But you do agree that it would Q. 18 protect them from retaliation? 19 If the reason for the action was solely 20 retaliation, then that could be supported. 2.1 Q. Okay. Now, did Metro schools investigate 2.2 Dr. Bailey's complaint of retaliation? 23 I do not have a file from an attorney that Α. 24 investigated a retaliation claim from Dr. Bailey.

Do you know today whether or not

25

Q.

Dr. Bailey made a claim of retaliation?

- A. I would have to go back and look and research.
- Q. Okay. So you're here today for your deposition, you have no knowledge about whether or not he even made a complaint of retaliation?
 - A. Correct.

1 4

2.2

- Q. Now, Dr. Pippa Meriwether, do you know whether or not she made a complaint of retaliation?
- A. The only complaint that I'm aware of from Dr. Meriwether was in the process of selection or not being selected as an executive director. She sent me a complaint, but basically said she didn't want to investigate the complaint, she just didn't want those things to happen to anyone else, and she basically identified flaws in the process, whether it was in her selection or not in her selection as an executive director or in the selection of principalship for the school she was applying for.
- Q. Let me ask you a question. Did you know that Dr. Lily Leffler was kin to Vanessa Garcia?
 - A. No, I did not.
- Q. Okay. If you discovered that officials
 were questioning an employee's loyalty to the
 district because of her association with someone who

had sued the district for sexually hostile work environment, what would you have done as the director of employee relations?

MR. FOX: Objection to the form.

THE WITNESS: You're asking for

6 hypotheticals.

1 4

2.2

BY MS. STEINER:

- Q. Yes, I am. I want to know what your department, in its policies and procedures that it has set up, would do in that situation.
 - A. So ask the question again, please.
- Q. If you were to discover that officials at Metro schools were questioning the loyalty of an employee, based upon her relationship to someone who has sued the employee for a sexually hostile work environment, what would you do as an employee relations director?
- A. It would depend on who the official was that was questioning the loyalty. I would have to raise the concern to my boss, raise the concern to the boss of the individual that was questioning the loyalty, understanding the purpose of the questioning or necessity of the questioning, but, again, it all depends on who was involved, whether or not I would be intimately involved or not.

- Q. Okay. If you found out the official was Dr. Battle, would you be involved in that?
- A. Anything that has to do with Dr. Battle, I would share it with the chair of the board and they would address it. And they don't even respond back to me if I raise a concern that's been shared to us regarding Dr. Battle.
- Q. When you say chairman of the board, what
 board are you referring to?
- 10 A. The board of the Nashville -- Metro
 11 Nashville Public School Board of Education.
- 12 Q. And who is the current chair?
- A. I don't know.
- Q. Is that the school board, is that what you're referring to?
- 16 A. Yes.

2

3

4

5

- Q. Okay. That Amy Frogge and -- that school board?
- 19 A. Yes.
- MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
- 21 BY MS. STEINER:
- Q. Have you raised any concerns with anyone on the school board about retaliation being conducted by Dr. Battle?
- 25 A. I'm trying to remember the last concern I

- had to raise to someone on the board, and it was
 years ago, and to be honest with you, I don't
 remember what the premise was. It involved Dr.
 Battle, but it also involved someone else, so it was
- 5 raised with the school board.
 - Q. Who else did it involve?
- 7 A. I can't remember.
 - Q. Do you recall a principal that was let go for sexual harassment?
- 10 A. I don't know what are you referring to.
- 11 Q. Sam Braden.

- 12 A. That happened -- he actually retired in
 13 lieu of any recommendation going to the board for
 14 his separation, based on the findings of an
 15 investigation.
- Q. Did you raise the -- were you there when the Braden issue was going on?
- A. I came in right about the same time that
 was all happening. I was involved in an
 investigation, but Dr. Braden was -- he had resigned
 prior to us, I think even finishing the
 investigation.
- Q. Dr. Braden had engaged in very gross
 actions of sexual harassment against individuals,
 correct?

1 MR. FOX: Objection to the form.

THE WITNESS: There were some significant allegations that were substantiated against him, but I can't speak to them specifically.

BY MS. STEINER:

1 4

2.2

- Q. That's what I mean, significant. And is it a fair statement, too, that many of the people who had complained of Dr. Braden's treatment, sexual harassment of them, lost their jobs or were demoted and filed lawsuits against Metro schools?
- A. I don't know. I don't know that the folks that filed complaints that I'm aware of have lost their jobs. I believe one has been promoted, one is still with the district. If they've left, they left on their own accord or for another reason, but I'm not aware of people that have left because they filed a complaint. Like I said, it all started happening when I first got here, so it was very --
- Q. Were you aware that many of those who people claimed retaliation, that they were demoted or lost their jobs because they had complained about Braden's treatment of them?
 - A. Was I aware?
 - O. Yes.
- 25 A. No. Like I said, I came in on the tail

```
1
    end of it when he was actually resigning.
 2
              Okay. A lot occurred after he resigned,
    though, correct?
 3
              There was a lot of press, media, you know,
 4
 5
    interest.
              And when you came in on the tail end of
         Ο.
 7
    it, did you have any job duties for dealing or
 8
    investigating with the Braden situation?
              I investigated one case with the Braden
         Α.
    situation.
10
11
         0.
              Who was that?
12
         Α.
              Stefan Williams.
13
             And what was his position with Metro
         0.
1 4
    schools?
15
              I believe at the time, he was a teacher.
         Α.
16
    I believe now he is an assistant principal.
17
         Q.
              And did Mr. Williams claim he was
18
    retaliated against?
19
              Yes, but not by Dr. Sam Braden.
20
         0.
              Did he claim he was retaliated against by
```

A. I think his allegation was that he was retaliated against by Dr. Braden's wife, Sharon Braden, who also no longer works for the district. Resigned.

the administration at Metro schools?

- 1 Q. Okay. Now, my understanding is that the 2 assistant principal there claimed he was demoted 3 because of his bringing forth to HR the complaints 4 against Braden? I don't know who that is. 5 In your investigation, did you ever come 6 7 across any allegations that the complaints against 8 Dr. Braden were brought to Dr. Battle? Do I know they were brought to Dr. Battle? Α. 10 I believe when the findings were reached, they were 11 shared with the hierarchy of HR who would share them 12 with Dr. Battle. 13 Were you aware that Dr. Battle actually 0. 1 4 was told early on about the complaints against Sam 15 Braden, and she said, he can't be guilty of that 16 because he taught me in grade school or high school? 17 MR. FOX: Objection to the form. 18 THE WITNESS: I don't know that she ever 19 said that. 20 BY MS. STEINER: 2.1 Okay. Let me hand you this document, and Q. 2.2 I only brought two. Can I show it to you and --23 MR. FOX: We can share.

BY MS. STEINER:

24

25

Thank you.

MS. STEINER:

1 Ο. And this was sent to me. 2 Α. Okay. 3 MR. FOX: Can we take a break so she can 4 look at this off the record? 5 MS. STEINER: Yes, that's fine. 6 (Brief break observed.) BY MS. STEINER: 7 8 0. Now, do you know whether or not other individuals who have testified in this matter in a deposition were in fear for their jobs? 10 11 MR. FOX: Objection to the form. 12 THE WITNESS: I'm not even sure what you 13 just asked. 1 4 BY MS. STEINER: 15 Were you aware that some of the 16 individuals that came in to give depositions in this 17 case were in fear of their jobs? 18 MR. FOX: Objection to the form. 19 BY MS. STEINER: 20 0. They thought they would be retaliated 21 against by Metro schools for their testimony? 2.2 I didn't know anybody else that's being 23 deposed for this. 2.4 Are you in fear of retaliation? 0. 25 Α. No.

1 Q. Now, for this e-mail that was sent to you, 2 do you recognize this on the second page? 3 Yes. Second and third page. It's an e-mail 4 5 that was sent to you from Dr. Bailey on June 15, 2020; is that correct? 6 7 That's what it says, yes. 8 0. Okay. And Dr. Bailey tells you in his formal complaint of retaliation, age and race 10 discrimination against Dr. Battle; is that correct? 11 Α. Yes. 12 He tells you why the retaliation occurred; 13 is that correct? And it's based on his 1 4 participation in her brother's disciplinary action, correct? 15 16 It says -- it's detailing why he believes 17 he was retaliated against. 18 Do you see here where it says, Dr. Battle 19 alleges that my removal was due to the district's 20 reorg and budget impact; do you see that? 2.1 MR. FOX: I'm sorry, Ms. Steiner, which --2.2 BY MS. STEINER: 23 It's the fourth sentence in the e-mail. 24 Says, Although Dr. Battle alleges that my removal

was due to the district's reorg and budget impact,

- 1 she is replacing me with someone that's not in a 2 protected age group for the same role; do you see 3 that? 4 Α. Yes. Did your department ask any questions to 5 6 find out what was the reason given by Dr. Battle for 7 the removal of Dr. Bailey? Was I involved in that? Did your department do any questioning to Ο. 10 find out why Dr. Bailey was removed? 11 It was outsourced to Mr. Klein. (Court 12 reporter asks for clarification.) Mr. Klein, Kevin 13 Klein. 14 Do you know what the results of that 15 investigation was? 16 Α. No. 17 Did you have any contact with Mr. Klein to 18 find out what had happened with that investigation? 19 I would follow up, I would tell him who he 20 would converse with, and I would give him contact 2.1 information because if it had to do with Dr. Battle, 2.2 the findings would go to the chairman of the board.
- Q. How did you tell him this?
- 24 A. E-mail.
- Q. Do you still have those e-mails?

```
1
         Α.
              I have no idea. I would imagine I do.
 2
              Could you please provide those e-mails to
 3
    your counsel?
 4
         Α.
              If I still have them, yes.
 5
                         (WHEREUPON, the
                         previously-mentioned documents
 6
 7
                         were to be marked Late-filed
 8
                         Exhibit Number 1.)
    BY MS. STEINER:
10
              And in those e-mails to Mr. Klein, did you
         Q.
11
    tell him who you thought he should interview?
12
         Α.
              No.
13
              What was stated in these e-mails going
1 4
    back and forth to Mr. Klein?
15
              I don't remember.
16
              Because I thought you just testified that
17
    there was -- you had information going back and
18
    forth with him, conversations going back and forth,
19
    asking him who he had interviewed?
20
         A. No, I didn't say that.
2.1
         Q.
              Okay.
2.2
              MS. STEINER: Could the court reporter
23
    read back that response. That was probably about
24
    two minutes ago. Let's see what that was.
25
               (Requested portion of record read.)
```

BY MS. STEINER:

1

2.

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- Q. Ms. Zander, when you said, I would tell him who he would converse with, what did you mean by that?
- A. I meant that he would share his results with the chair, board chair, because that was the person who ultimately was over Dr. Battle, or the board is actually over Dr. Battle, so the results would go to the chair, and that would be the contact information that I would provide to him.
- Q. And so then was a written report provided to the chair?
- 13 A. I have no idea.
- Q. Did he ask you for contact information for any employees?
 - A. He may have. Like I said, I don't remember specifically.
- Q. Do you have -- that's something else, too.

 Any e-mails that you had going back and forth with

 Kevin Klein, I'd like that marked as an exhibit, if

 that was not part of 1. I may have already asked

 for that. All e-mails going back and forth with

 Kevin Klein, Exhibit Number 1.
 - A. Around this time frame?
- Q. Around this complaint of retaliation, I

```
1
    don't care if it was six months later or a year
 2
    later, if it has anything to do with my client's
 3
    complaint of retaliation, I want a copy of it, okay?
 4
         Α.
              Okay.
 5
               So when you got this e-mail, June 15,
 6
    2020, besides talking to Kevin Klein, did you do
 7
    anything else about this e-mail?
 8
         Α.
              I don't remember.
         Ο.
              Did you read the e-mail?
10
         Α.
              Yes.
11
              Now, when employees are placed in teaching
         Q.
12
    positions, do you know when the notices go out for
    that?
13
14
              No.
         Α.
15
              Do you know if there is a particular
16
    cut-off date, such as June 15th?
17
              Because the next school year starts in
         Α.
18
    July, I believe they want to have all placements
19
    done by June 15th. That sounds like a logical,
20
    normal thing.
21
               If you're not placed by June 15th, is it
22
    logical that you're not going to be placed?
23
              No, not necessarily. It depends on what's
         Α.
24
    open, what's available, maybe something just opened
25
    up.
```

- Q. And if nothing opens up, then that teacher does not have a job, correct?
- A. I don't handle that piece of the situation, so I don't understand the placement pieces.

- Q. Now, did Metro schools do anything at all as a result of this June 15th, 2020 e-mail from Dr. Bailey to protect him in his position as principal at White's Creek?
- A. Well, if he wrote this to me June 15th, he was already nonrenewed, so at that point, I don't know that there was that was already an action that was taken. June 15th is when he sent it to me. June 15th, that decision would have already been made, so...
 - Q. If someone is nonrenewed for job performance, are they typically let go of Metro schools?
 - A. It's not typical. There isn't anything -everything is valued on a case-by-case. If it's
 performance because of the level, maybe they
 wouldn't be good at a high school, but they'd be
 okay at middle school or elementary school,
 depending on what the situation is exactly.
 - Q. Do you know whether or not Metro schools

has access to know whether or not an employee has a teaching certificate?

A. Yes.

2.2

- Q. Okay. Is that true then that Metro schools does have access to find out whether or not its employees have teaching certificates?
- A. I mean, it's available on TN Compass, so they should be able to see if they have an active license.
- Q. Okay. And if someone does not have a teaching license, can they be transferred into a teaching position?
- A. No.
- Q. Now, so then after getting this complaint from Dr. Bailey, this date of June 15, 2020, as you sit here today, you have no idea whether or not it was investigated or what was the result of the investigation?
- A. If it was outsourced to Mr. Klein, I'm pretty confident that he investigated it. As to the findings of that investigation, I don't remember if I received them. I believe my recommendation was to send them to the chair, board chair. I want to say that might have been Anna Shepherd at the time, but -- because I remember conversing with

```
1
    Ms. Shepherd, telling her that this would be coming,
 2
    but if it went to Ms. Shepherd, I never got any
 3
    follow-up.
         Q. Okay. Could we have this marked Exhibit
 4
    Number 2 to your deposition?
 5
 6
                         (WHEREUPON, the
 7
                         previously-mentioned document was
 8
                         marked as Exhibit Number 2.)
    BY MS. STEINER:
              Did you hear about this Let's Make a Slave
10
11
    lesson that was taught at Waverly Belmont?
12
              I recall something about that, yes.
13
              Did you know that one of the children who
1 4
    was in the classroom that was taught that lesson
15
    worked for Metro schools, one of the parents of the
16
    child?
17
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
18
              THE WITNESS: I think I later learned that
19
    one of the student's parents worked for Metro
20
    schools.
2.1
    BY MS. STEINER:
2.2
              Did you learn the name of the parent?
23
              Only because of the complaint that was
24
    filed with Ms. Batey.
25
         Q.
              What was the name of the parent?
```

- Α. I believe it was (name spoken off record).
- When she filed the complaint with
- Ms. Batey, what did it state? 3

2

4

5

8

11

12

13

1 4

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16

17

18

19

20

21

2.2

23

24

25

Α.

I don't know specifically.

student being subjected to the class.

- Did she claim that the lesson was racial?
- I believe that there was some racial 6 I believe that was her concern with the 7
- Q. Okay. So that came to Ms. Batey and she 10 investigated it?
 - I believe she worked with school leadership to investigate it.
 - 0. And that's because you do not want discriminatory lessons taught to the students, correct?
 - I think that discrimination and harassment are a real part of the world. I think there is a time and place where there is an education that needs to take place of lessons that are discriminatory. I believe -- or can be viewed as or perceived as, they should be well vetted before they ever go in front of a student.
 - And so did the complaint that Ms. -- and 0. I'm going to call her Jane Doe for the rest of this deposition; is that okay with you? When I say Jane

- Doe, you know I'm referring to (name spoken off record)?
- 3 A. Okay.

5

6

12

13

1 4

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

- Q. So then Jane Doe brought it to Ms. Batey's attention that she felt that the lesson plan, Let's Make a Slave, was discriminatory?
- 7 A. I'm not sure exactly what (name spoken off 8 record) bought to Ms. Batey.
- 9 MR. FOX: Objection. I think we're saying 10 Jane Doe.
- 11 BY MS. STEINER:
 - Q. I'm sorry. Was it your understanding that Jane Doe brought to Ms. Batey's attention that she thought the lesson that was taught to her son was discriminatory?
 - A. I don't know what Ms. Doe told Ms. Batey regarding her claim. I don't know if what Ms. Doe reported to Ms. Batey was the situation involving the student or the action taken with her alleging that it might have been retaliation for her concern about raising her concern about her student. Again, I'm not intimately familiar with that.
- Q. So then it's your understanding that Ms.

 Doe brought to Ms. Batey's attention that she

 thought she was being retaliated against because of

- 1 her complaints of Let's Make a Slave lesson,
 2 correct?
- A. I don't know exactly what the name of the lesson was, I know that the complaint had something to do with her and I believe she felt it was as a result of her speaking up about the lesson with her son.
 - Q. And did Ms. Batey bring that to your attention in these weekly meetings that you would have with her?
- A. Probably.

- 12 Q. In these weekly meetings, do you keep 13 notes of what's said to you?
- 14 A. They have notes on their files. I would
 15 just ask for updates on their investigation, where
 16 they were.
- Q. When you say you asked for updates, are those oral or written?
- 19 A. Yes. We sit around a table and we discuss open cases.
- Q. Did you discuss Jane Doe's complaint of retaliation?
- A. Possibly. I don't remember specifically.
- Q. Who was on the table with you?
- 25 A. If I'm having a conversation about that,

- 1 it would have to have been with Ms. Batey. I don't 2 know who else would have been there at the time.
- Q. And do you know whether or not an investigation was conducted to see if it was retaliation?
- A. If I came to Ms. Batey, I believe Ms.

 Batey did do the investigation.
 - Q. Did she go out then to -- when you do an investigation, are your employees trained to go out and interview witnesses?
- 11 A. Yes. We interview witnesses.
- Q. Do you keep notes on what's said in the interviews?
- 14 A. Yes.

- Q. And do you then come to some conclusion that's written?
- A. If we're handling the investigation, yes, we would come up with a summary.
- 19 Q. Have you come up with any summary that
 20 you've seen on Jane Doe's complaint of retaliation?
- A. I don't -- I don't remember, but -- and I
 hate to assume, but if Ms. Batey handled the
 investigation, there is a summary.
- Q. And do you recall any outsourcing of this claim by Jane Doe to any other individuals, such as

Kevin Klein to investigate?

- A. I don't believe so.
- Q. Is it the standard protocol and policy of your office that when a complaint of retaliation comes in, it is investigated, the witnesses are interviewed and documentation is kept?
 - A. Yes.

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2.1

- Q. And when the witnesses are interviewed, do you typically try to keep statements that the witnesses actually will sign?
- A. It it's a face-to-face interview, we give them an opportunity to review the notes. If it's a Teams, and they request to review the notes, we share them with them.
- Q. Can you tell me anyone who was interviewed by Metro schools concerning Jane Doe's complaint of retaliation?
- 18 A. I don't know.
 - Q. Did anyone tell you not to investigate that claim or that that complaint -- that claim of retaliation should not be investigated or was not valid?
- A. I am not aware of that.
- Q. Did Dr. Battle at any point contact you about any of these claims or did you contact Dr.

```
1
    Battle?
 2.
               I would not speak directly with Dr.
 3
    Battle, Dr. Battle would speak through my boss.
 4
              Can you tell me any reason why Jane Doe's
         Ο.
    complaint of retaliation was not investigated?
 5
 6
              Can I think of any reason?
 7
         Ο.
              Yes.
 8
               I don't know. I cannot -- unless it
    wasn't for a protected class issue, but...
10
         Q.
              Okay.
11
               It doesn't mean it wasn't investigated, it
         Α.
12
    may not have been investigated by our office.
13
              Do you know of any other office at Metro
         0.
1 4
    schools investigating Jane Doe's complaint of
    retaliation?
15
16
              I am not aware of...
17
               If someone brings a complaint of
18
    retaliation like Jane Doe to your department and
19
    it's not investigated properly, do you have a job
20
    duty for counseling or disciplining Ms. Batey or
2.1
    whoever else took in the complaint for not
2.2
    investigating it?
23
               It would be my responsibility to address
         Α.
24
    issues if they were identified in the process, yes.
```

Have you, at any point, counseled with or

25

Q.

- disciplined any employee in your office for not properly investigating Jane Doe's complaint of retaliation?
- A. I have not.
- 5 MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
- 6 BY MS. STEINER:

- Q. Do you know why Jane Doe's job as director of school choice was eliminated in 2020?
 - A. I do not.
 - Q. Tell me a bit about if someone is transferred to another position and their support staff, are you aware about a 10 percent reduction in salary being the limit?
 - A. I believe our procedures have something to do with a 10 percent, but it's not something that I am involved in frequently unless there is some type of a wage grievance filed.
 - Q. Were you aware that Ms. Doe not only lost her position as director of school choice, but when she was transferred, she lost almost 40 percent of her salary?
- 22 A. I was not aware of that.
- Q. Were you aware that she filed a complaint
 with your department claiming that she had lost over
 40 percent and it should have been capped at

10 percent?

2.

1 4

- A. I don't remember that complaint being filed, but, again, I believe Ms. Batey handled the issues with Ms. Doe.
- Q. If my client had complained about being reduced -- if my client was considered -- if her position was considered support and she's moved from that position, do you know whether or not the policies at Metro schools allow her -- limit the reduction of her salary to 10 percent?
- A. I think that that's inaccurate. I believe it's 10 percent or the top of the pay grade, whichever. You have to stay within the pay grades, so depending on the position that person accepted or was placed in, it would be 10 percent or the top of the pay grade. I don't believe it's restricted to 10 percent, because if somebody dropped several pay grades, it would be greater than 10 percent.
- Q. And that's in the support handbook, correct?
- 21 A. It could be in a procedural book.
 - Q. I'm going to try to pull that up the next time we break, and if you could, too, if you could try to pull it up, because we're going to see whether or not it has this top of the pay grade on

```
1
    that policy, okay?
               If Ms. Doe -- if Jane Doe complained that
 2.
 3
    she was reduced more than 10 percent of her salary,
 4
    is that something that your department should
 5
    handle?
               If it came to me as a level two grievance,
 7
    I would handle it, but I did not handle a level two
 8
    grievance on Ms. Doe.
              Where is the level one grievance filed?
         Ο.
10
               It would be with the supervisor, the next
11
    level supervisor.
12
         Ο.
              And for Ms. Doe, who was that?
13
              I cannot tell you.
14
               If it is brought to your department, does
15
    your department have a duty for telling the
16
    employee, you need to take it back to the
17
    supervisor?
18
               We have. I don't know what was said to a
19
    specific employee.
20
         0.
              Do you know whether or not your department
21
    told Ms. Doe, hey, you need to take this complaint
2.2
    about the 10 percent decrease in pay to your
23
    supervisor?
2.4
              I don't know.
         Α.
25
              If this is taken to Bridget Jones, does
```

- she have a job duty for telling Ms. Doe, you need to take this complaint to your next level supervisor?
- A. She is HR hiring manager, so they do position movements and all that. Again, I don't handle that piece, so I don't know what their instruction is. I would think that they would help them understand what the pay difference would be.
 - Q. Okay.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

- A. Again, that's me speculating. I don't know for sure so...
- Q. Do you know what happened to Ms. Doe's complaint that she was not -- she was decreased more than 10 percent?
- 14 A. No, I do not.
- Q. Okay. Do you know whether or not her longevity pay was reduced or cut out?
- 17 A. I do not.
- Q. Did you know that Ms. Doe applied for other positions at Metro schools?
- A. I do not.
- Q. Did you know that one of the supervisors
 where she applied was informed -- one of the
 individuals in HR was informed that they could not
 hire Ms. Doe into a position because she had a
 lawsuit against the district?

```
1
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
 2
              THE WITNESS: I do not know that.
 3
    BY MS. STEINER:
              If an individual was informed of that,
 4
    someone in central office was informed, you cannot
 5
    hire Jane Doe because she has a lawsuit against the
 7
    district, does that employee have a job duty for
 8
    reporting it to your department?
              I believe that they would probably discuss
10
    it with their boss, and if it needed to come to us,
    it would come to us.
11
12
             Okay. Do you mind if we break for about
         0.
13
    five or ten minutes?
1 4
              MR. FOX: That's fine.
15
               (Brief break observed.)
16
    BY MS. STEINER:
17
              We are going -- Ms. Harbison is going to
18
    put a document up on the screen and it's the
    promotions, demotions, transfers, reorganizations
19
20
    and displacements policy.
2.1
              MS. HARBISON: Can you see what's on my
2.2
    screen?
23
              THE WITNESS: Yes.
24
              MS. HARBISON: Let me go to the first
25
           This is what is being shown on the screen.
    page.
```

```
1
    BY MS. STEINER:
 2.
               Is this the handbook?
         Α.
               That's the support handbook.
 3
              MR. FOX: What's the date?
 4
 5
               THE WITNESS:
                             That's an old support
 6
    handbook. That's not the most current.
 7
    BY MS. STEINER:
 8
         0.
               Sure. Do you know if this is the one that
    was in existence in the year 2020?
10
               I can't remember the last time we updated
11
         It was updated in 2020, but I'm not exactly
12
    sure exactly when.
13
               If Ms. Doe were to testify this is the one
1 4
    that she had that was in effect when she was
15
    director of school choice, would you have any reason
16
    to dispute that?
17
                    It all depends on the timing of when
         Α.
              No.
18
    it was, because the new handbook is now digital,
19
    electronic, it's available on MyMNPS page, like each
20
    one of us can access it at any time through that
21
    page, so when it was updated, it was updated to an
2.2
    electronic version. It all depends on the timing of
```

Q. Okay. We're going to take you to

when that all transpired and when the book was

23

24

25

updated.

Promotions. Do you see this that's entitled Job
Promotions, Demotions, Transfers, Reorganizations
and Displacements?

A. Yes.

1 4

2.2

- Q. And is that the policy at Metro schools for Promotions, demotions, and transfers for support?
 - A. Yes.
- Q. Okay. And for demotions, do you see where it says demotion procedures, number (1) In the case of a demotion resulting from poor performance or employee choice, the employee's current salary shall be reduced by 10 percent; and (2) In the case of a demotion resulting from an organizational change or development assignment, all attempts will be made to keep the individual at the current salary; is that correct?
 - A. That's what it says.
- Q. Can you tell me -- when Ms. Doe made this complaint that she had had a massive reduction in salary, can you tell me what attempts were made by Metro schools to keep her at her current salary?
 - A. I have no idea.
- Q. Did anyone in your department question
 anyone to find out what attempts were made to keep

her at her current salary?

2.

2.2

2.4

- A. If it was Ms. Batey, I would have thought she would have conversed with the HR hiring manager to see what had been done.
- Q. If Ms. Doe was director of school choice, can you tell me who her direct supervisor would have been?
 - A. I have no idea.
- Q. Do you know whether or not anyone from Metro schools -- do you know why Ms. Doe was put in a position that was at 40 percent lower than what her salary was?
 - A. No, I do not.
- Q. Would you agree that if you look at this policy, if someone suffers a demotion because of an organizational change or development assignment, that in all likelihood, they're going to end up at the same rate of pay, correct?
- A. I don't make assumptions. I think it's on a case-by-case. It says all attempts will be made to keep them at their current salary.
- Q. Now, assuming that the complaint -- Ms.

 Doe takes a complaint to your department that she suffered a demotion because of an organizational change, and that she was put in a position that the

- salary was almost 40 percent or over 40 percent lower than what it had been before, would your department have a duty for investigating that?
- A. We'd have a duty for making sure somebody looked into it from the compensation side.
- Q. Do you know who would have been -- what department you would have contacted for the compensation side?
- A. It would probably start with the HR hiring manager, but it may go into the executive director over employee services, because they were over compensation.
 - Q. And who was that?

- A. Well, at the time, it was the executive director, and I think it was Lisa Spencer. Her position is different now.
- Q. Was Lisa Spencer recently promoted?
- A. Yeah. Her title is different now.
- 19 Q. And that was a promotion, correct?
- 20 A. Yeah, I believe so.
- Q. Okay. And if Ms. Doe makes a complaint to
 your department that she was demoted due to an
 organizational change due to the budget and your
 department doesn't investigate that or doesn't send
 it to the compensation side, should someone in your

department be disciplined or reprimanded or counseled with that they didn't follow your policy?

1 4

2.4

- A. We would address whatever we didn't do that we should have done, but if it was shared with somebody that was in a position to look into it, we don't look into the wage pieces. Like I said, I will look into wage pieces only if it comes to me as a step two grievance, but I have to rely on other people because I'm not intimately involved in the whole wage complaint.
- Q. Do you know whether or not anyone in your department or the compensation department was ever counseled with, disciplined or reprimanded for not investigating Ms. Doe's complaint that she did not receive the proper pay?
 - A. I do not know that anybody was addressed.
- Q. Can you see how Jane Doe -- can you see how Jane Doe, after she complains of the Let's Make a Slave lesson taught to her son, within weeks has her position as director of school choice, eliminated, and then she is transferred into a position where the pay cut is almost 40 percent, can you see how she would think that's retaliation?

THE WITNESS: I don't know all the

MR. FOX: Objection to the form.

- circumstances that surrounded all of that and the timing when the decision was made to eliminate her position. She is entitled to feel the way she wants
- 4 to feel or believe it's for reasons of her own
- 5 accord. It's hard enough for me to stay objective.
- 6 I don't always -- I try to empathize, but I don't
- 7 know what is on people's minds.
- 8 BY MS. STEINER:
 - Q. What did you do to empathize with Ms. Doe?
- 10 A. I didn't, because I didn't intimately get
 11 involved with her situation.
- Q. Now, in Ms. Doe's situation, do you know
 who Gloria Hill or Angela Johnson -- do you know
 either one of those two individuals?
- 15 A. Yes.

- Q. Who are they?
- A. Gloria Hill was a former HR manager, no
 longer works with the district. Angela Johnson was
 a former HR manager that handled central office
 employees, and she is no longer with the district.
 - Q. As an HR manager, what do they do?
- 22 A. I can only speak generally. They handle a
 23 lot of the hiring, opening up requisitions for new
 24 positions who are assigned specific areas of the
 25 school district. They took people from -- you know,

- through the requisitions, through the hiring

 process, did that, all the administrative

 background, followed through the systems and brought

 people on board. Then if there were transfers or

 other status changes with employees, they would also

 facilitate that.
 - Q. So then if an employee is applying for a job at Metro schools and the department head wants to hire them, do they have to get that approved by the hiring manager?
- 11 A. They make the recommendations to the

 12 hiring manager. I'm not exactly sure what the

 13 approval process is, if it involves the executive

 14 directors. Like I said, it's not something that I

 15 interact with on a daily basis, but it's processed

 16 through the HR hiring manager.
- Q. Do you know why Ms. Johnson is no longer with the district?
- 19 A. I understood that she resigned her 20 position.
- Q. Do you know why she resigned?
- A. I do not.

8

- Q. Do you know why Gloria Hill is no longer with the district?
- A. Ms. Hill, I believe, accepted a position

where she could work remotely.

Q. Were you aware that -- I don't know if it was Ms. Hill or Ms. Johnson, but I think it was Ms. Johnson, were you aware that one of these individuals was informed that they could not hire Jane Doe into a position because of her lawsuit

MR. FOX: Objection to the form.

THE WITNESS: I have no knowledge of that.

BY MS. STEINER:

against the district?

1

2

3

4

5

7

10

11

12

13

1 4

15

16

17

18

19

20

2.1

22

23

- Q. If that is known at Metro central office, should it be brought to your attention?
- A. It should have been brought to somebody's attention. I don't know that it would have been mine. I think it would go to the chief human resource officer.
 - Q. If something like that was bought to your attention, but the employee said, I don't want to bring this to your attention because I fear retaliation, what would you have done?
 - A. My response is that if you're telling me something, I'm obligated to look into it and to see if any wrongdoing has occurred and remedy it. I cannot not do something with it.
- Q. I want to talk to you a little bit about

```
1
    this concept of fear and retaliation. If somebody
 2
    says, I have a fear of retaliation, it's my
    understanding from your testimony today, that what
 3
    your office typically does is you tell them, well,
 4
 5
    if you think you're retaliated against, come and
 6
    tell us?
 7
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
 8
              THE WITNESS:
                             Yes. We ask them to file a
 9
    report.
10
    BY MS. STEINER:
11
              After the retaliation happens, correct?
12
              Well, it depends on when it comes.
         Α.
13
    mean, if they're just expecting it or whatever, they
1 4
    put it on the record. There is not anything to
15
    investigate because something didn't happen yet.
16
    Once it's happened, we can look into it.
17
              Okay. Now, when Dr. Bailey told you that
         Q.
18
    something's happened and I've been retaliated
19
    against, he had already lost his position as
20
    principal at White's Creek, correct?
2.1
         Α.
              Based on the timing of his complaint, yes.
22
         Q.
              And did you have the ability to put him
23
    back in his position at White's Creek?
2.4
              I do not.
         Α.
25
              So then if you wait until after the
```

- retaliation occurs, the employees have been
 retaliated against and you have no ability to
 correct it, correct?

 A. I think that if they substantiate that
 retaliation occurred, then the recommendation wo
 - retaliation occurred, then the recommendation would be to remedy that situation.
 - Q. In Dr. Bailey's case, there was no investigation so there was no recommendation,
- MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
- 11 THE WITNESS: I don't know that there was 12 no investigation.
- 13 BY MS. STEINER:

- Q. If someone says they have a fear of retaliation, do you separate the individuals, or do you have to have actual retaliation occur?
- 17 A. We have to assess whether or not -- what 18 the risk is.
- Q. Did you ever assess the risk of retaliation when Dr. Bailey complained to Ms. Batey about retaliation?
- A. I don't know when he reported it to
 Ms. Batey, so I only know of what he sent me.
- Q. Assuming that he reported to Ms. Batey
 that he had a fear of retaliation in April, before

he lost his job, April of 2020, do you know what the assessment of retaliation was at that point?

MR. FOX: Objection to the form.

THE WITNESS: I do not.

BY MS. STEINER:

2.1

2.2

2.4

- Q. Do you know what -- how do you calculate an assessment of retaliation?
- A. You assess the risk to the individual, interaction, et cetera, et cetera. Like I said, everything is on a case-by-case situation. We try to evaluate and try to put safeguards in place, but, again, we are a small department and we rely upon the assistance from the relevant leaders.
- Q. Okay. Dr. Bailey, when he complained of retaliation, he had a fear of retaliation in, I believe it was April of 2020, before he lost his job, how would you assess the risk involved in that?
 - A. I don't know.
- Q. Do you know whether or not the risk of retaliation was ever assessed by your department?
- A. I don't know. But if it was April of 2020, the end of the school year was in May of 2020, I would think that the timing of that would have -- I believe the notification to those being impacted by nonrenewals is usually a month out from the end

```
1
    of the year, so it may have already been something
 2
    that he was aware of when he brought it to Ms. Batey
 3
    if it was in April, depending on when he was
    notified by a supervisor.
 4
 5
         Q.
              Okay. What was my question?
               (Requested portion of record read.)
 6
 7
              THE WITNESS:
                             I don't know.
 8
    BY MS. STEINER:
              Now, as you sit here today, do you have
         Q.
10
    any plans of going back to your department to find
11
    out whether or not the risk was ever assessed and
12
    counseling or reprimanding any employees for not
13
    assessing that risk?
14
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
15
              THE WITNESS:
                             I would be concerned whether
16
    or not I would be doing something that would
17
    obstruct your case at this point.
18
    BY MS. STEINER:
19
              And so do you mean something that would
20
    either support or not support Metro schools'
21
    position in this matter?
2.2
              No, that's not what I meant.
23
              What do you mean?
         0.
24
              I mean, if you're deposing somebody else
         Α.
25
    in my department, I don't want to interfere with
```

1 that situation, because all the information related 2 to this situation would be in that person's office. And if I were to investigate it, I would have 3 to involve that individual. 4 5 And why can't you do that if I'm going to Q. 6 take their deposition? 7 I don't know. I don't want to interfere. 8 I would want -- not want to interfere. Q. So you would not do anything? 10 Α. No, that's not what I said. 11 Will you do something? 0. 12 Α. Eventually, yes. 13 0. What will you do? 14 I don't know. Depends on what I find. Α. 15 MR. FOX: Objection to the form. 16 BY MS. STEINER: 17 Okay. When you're investigating 18 complaints of retaliation, do you look at things 19 like termination notices, letters? 20 Α. We would look at whatever documentation 21 was available surrounding the situation. 2.2 Did you know -- if the director of schools 23 says they nonrenewed someone for job performance, is

that decision by the director set in stone, meaning

say, no, you can't do that?

2.1

2.2

2.4

- A. Ultimately, it's the director of schools' decision, but prior to those recommendations for nonrenewals being presented, I am aware that there is a process to ensure that there's adequate documentation to support a nonrenewal for performance.
- Q. Okay. And when you say adequate documentation, what do you mean?
- A. That they have taken progressive steps to either support the employee and success in their role or they've initiated the corrective action process.
- Q. If there's no documentation to support the removal of Dr. Bailey as principal, would your department tell whoever wants to remove him, you can't do this because there's no documentation?
- A. It's not my place. My department doesn't evaluate the nonrenewals. We're not involved. We just find out who it has been so...
- Q. It it's for job performance, does your department have the ability to go in and say, you need to document problems with job performance before you can nonrenew for job performance?
- A. We encourage our leaders to document

```
1
    performance issues.
 2
              Do you know whether or not Dr. Bailey had
    any performance issues documented with him?
 3
               I do not know that.
 4
 5
              Let me hand you this real quick. And I'm
 6
    going to get another copy for the court reporter
 7
    because this has something on the back that I do
 8
    not -- it's not necessary to make an exhibit here.
 9
               If you could read this May 4, 2020 letter,
10
    then I'll question you just a bit about it.
11
              MS. STEINER: I would like to make the --
12
    what we've got on the board right now, the Support
13
    Handbook, the first page and then the page that we
1 4
    discussed dealing with promotions and demotions, so
15
    it's going to be two pages, the next-numbered
16
    exhibit and I think it's Exhibit 3.
17
                         (WHEREUPON, the
18
                         previously-mentioned document was
19
                         marked as Exhibit Number 3.)
20
    BY MS. STEINER:
              Now, Ms. Zander, have you ever seen this
2.1
         Q.
2.2
    before?
23
         Α.
              Have I ever seen this particular letter
2.4
    before?
25
         Q.
              Yes.
```

1 A. No.

7

8

10

15

16

17

- Q. Is this addressed to Dr. Bailey?
- 3 A. It appears to be.
- Q. Does this state that Dr. Bailey has lost his position due to the district's organization and budget impact?
 - A. That's what it says.
 - Q. Does that mean because the job has been eliminated; is that what that means?
 - A. I don't know that the job was eliminated.
- 11 Q. Will you agree this does not say for job 12 performance?
- 13 A. It does not say that it was for job 14 performance.
 - Q. And if someone has their position eliminated for job performance, should the supervisor be honest with them and tell them that's why their position is being eliminated?
- 19 A. In a perfect world, yes.
- Q. Okay. Do you know today why Dr. Bailey
 lost his job as principal at White's Creek?
- A. I understand that there were school

 statistics and school data information that

 continued to decline under his leadership, and -
 which is what prompted the change, but specifically,

```
1
    I do not know.
 2.
              And who told you that?
              I think it's just an understanding that
 3
    was shared. I don't know if it was by Dr. Griffin
 4
 5
    or whether it was because I was collecting
    information related to a public records request that
 7
    I learned of it. I can't tell you where I came to
    know that or learned of that.
              Can you tell me what documents you looked
         Q.
10
    at?
11
              No, I can't tell you.
12
              Now, do you know where -- do you know --
         Q.
13
    it's my understanding Dr. Griffin has left the
1 4
    district; is that correct?
15
              Yes, I believe she retired.
16
              Do you know if she has any health issues?
17
              I wouldn't be at liberty to discuss those
         Α.
18
    if I did.
19
         Q.
              Do you know if she has any health issues?
20
              MR. FOX: You can tell her, if you know.
21
              THE WITNESS:
                             I don't know, if she has
2.2
    health issues, what they are. I believe it was due
23
    to her health.
2.4
    BY MS. STEINER:
25
              Do you have -- so you have no idea whether
```

or not she may have cancer or if she may have had a heart attack or something else may have been going on with her?

1 4

2.2

2.4

- A. I have no idea what the health issues are.
- Q. And so it was only after you got a record request that you looked into why Dr. Bailey was no longer there?
- A. I don't know that I actively researched it. I don't know exactly when I became aware of -- it could have been interaction with Dr. Mells. I can't specifically say when I became aware of possible reasons for the change.
- Q. Do you tell the people who work -- do you tell the staff at MNPS that they need to keep their documentation of things?
 - A. That would be my guidance, to maintain documentation.
 - Q. If documents are missing, what do you do, do you do an investigation to find out why?
 - A. It depends on if it's something that would come into our realm of responsibility, but people don't preserve documents -- I mean, like I said, there is three investigators in my office, I don't know that we have the resources to investigate missing documentation throughout a district the size

we are.

1 4

- Q. Did you know that the executive directors were told they were going to have to reapply for their positions?
 - A. I am aware of that, yes.
- Q. Did you know that the scores -- that the applicants were scored, did you know that?
 - A. Did I what?
- Q. Know that the applicants were interviewed and scored?
- A. I wasn't part of that process, so -- but interviews, they do score on a scale. Each person on the panel scores on a scale and then they put it all together and come up with the highest scoring or whatever, but I don't know, I didn't partake in that process.
 - Q. Is it the procedure of Metro schools that when the interviews occur, that you should have the same interviewers and interview the person at the same time?
- A. When possible.
- Q. Okay. Because if you have different interviewers, you could have people who score differently affecting the score, correct?
- 25 A. Yes.

- Q. Okay. So then is it the procedure at Metro schools, and the procedure that I assume your department tells Metro schools, if you interview, make sure you use the same interviewers and have them interview the candidate at the same time so they can hear the same questions?
- A. Again, this is not a process I oversee. I am guided by somebody to -- when I hired, and I only hired one individual in the time I've been with the district, I know that I want a consistent panel. I want the same parties to be available for all the interviews that I'm going to conduct so that I don't run into trouble with inconsistencies with scoring.
- Q. Would it be inconsistent if you used different interviewers?
- A. It's possible that it's inconsistent with different interviewers.
- Q. Did you know that for the executive director's position, that some of the scores were missing?
- A. No, I did not.

1 4

2.1

2.2

2.4

Q. Okay. Did you know that after the interviews were supposed to be concluded, that individuals were told they did not have the job and that interviews continued thereafter with Brian

```
1
    Mells; did you know that?
 2.
         Α.
              No.
 3
              Did you know Brian Mells' scores ended up
         0.
 4
    missing?
 5
               I would not know that information.
         Α.
              Excuse me, I made a mistake.
 6
         Q.
 7
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
 8
    BY MS. STEINER:
               Chad High. Did you know Chad High's
         Q.
    scores ended up missing?
10
11
               I would not know that information.
12
              Did you know that Chad High was hired as
13
    an executive director and his scores were missing?
1 4
               I know that Chad High is an executive
15
    director, I have no idea about the other part of
16
    your question. I would not have knowledge of any of
17
    that.
18
              If there is a claim of retaliation by, for
19
    instance, Pippa Meriwether, Lily Leffler, Dr. Damon
20
    Cathey, and anyone else that may have interviewed
21
    for that executive director's position, if there is
22
    a claim that they were retaliated against, should
23
    that have been brought to the attention of your
24
    department?
```

If the retaliation claim was against

25

Α.

someone like the chief HR, again that would have been farmed out to a different investigator.

Q. Do you know whether or not any of these complaints of retaliation that Dr. Meriwether, Dr. Leffler, Dr. Cathey, Dr. -- made with regard to the executive director positions, do you know whether or not they were ever investigated?

MR. FOX: Objection to the form.

THE WITNESS: The only complaint I saw from those three individuals you're naming specifically was a complaint that was addressed to me by Dr. Meriwether. It was not a complaint of discrimination. It was more a complaint of inconsistency with the processes around the selection process.

BY MS. STEINER:

1 4

- Q. So her letter to you did not mention retaliation or discrimination?
- A. I don't recall it saying it anything
 having to do with retaliation or discrimination.

 She even said, this doesn't have to be looked into,

 Just didn't want other people subjected to this.
 - Q. If she had claimed retaliation, would your department have assigned it to someone to investigate it?

- A. It would have gone outside the organization.
- Q. Did her complaint of retaliation go outside the organization?
- A. I did not outsource a complaint from Dr.

 Meriwether to another investigator outside. If she
 filed an EEOC charge, that would be handled
 differently through our legal department.
- 9 Q. Can you tell me why you did not outsource
 10 Dr. Meriwether's claim of -- that she brought to
 11 you?
- A. I didn't consider it a claim of
 discrimination or harassment. She was talking about
 the processes and the individuals.
- 15 Q. Okay.

2

3

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- 16 A. It's my understanding, there was a response given to her.
 - Q. What did the response --
- A. Even though she did not ask for a response or an investigation. I don't know. Dr. Barnes sent the response.
- Q. If someone asked you not to investigate do
 you still have a duty to investigate once it's
 brought to your attention?
- 25 A. If the employee says, I don't want you to

1 do anything about it because, I still have a duty to 2 investigate it. 3 Q. Okay. 4 Which is why that was raised. I shared that information with my boss at the time. 5 Who was your boss at the time? 6 Q. 7 Mr. Barnes or Dr. Barnes. 8 0. So you shared Dr. Meriwether's complaint that she brought to you with to Dr. Barnes? 10 Α. I did. 11 And why -- when you shared it with him, Q. 12 did you ask him what you should do? 13 I may have. I don't remember exactly what Α. we discussed. 14 15 Do you know what he told you? 0. 16 Α. No. 17 Do you know what Metro schools did as a 18 result of Dr. Meriwether's complaint? 19 Α. Like I said, I was aware that there was a 20 response from Dr. Barnes, other than that, I do not 2.1 know. 2.2 You were aware there was a response from 23 Dr. Barnes? 2.4 Α. Yes. 25 Q. But you don't know what was in that

```
1
    response?
 2.
               I can't remember it.
 3
               Was it by e-mail, was it oral?
         0.
               I believe there was a letter.
 4
         Α.
 5
         Q.
              A letter from Dr. Barnes to you about what
 6
 7
         Α.
               To Dr. Meriwether.
 8
         0.
              From Dr. Barnes to Dr. Meriwether?
         Α.
              Yes.
              And do you know what it said?
10
         Q.
11
               I don't remember exactly what it said.
         Α.
                                                         Ιt
12
    was responding to some of the things that she had
13
    raised in her concern.
1 4
              And did Dr. Barnes investigate it?
15
               I don't know what Dr. Barnes did.
16
              Okay. Let me hand you this that's dated
         Q.
17
    June 21st, 2020, do you recognize this document?
18
    (Court reporter asks for clarification.)
               MS. STEINER: I'd like to offer as an
19
20
    Exhibit 4, Dr. Bailey's termination -- or the May
21
    4th, 2020 letter to Dr. Bailey.
2.2
                         (WHEREUPON, the
23
                         previously-mentioned document was
24
                         marked as Exhibit Number 4.)
25
              MR. FOX: No objection.
```

```
1
               THE WITNESS: I've never seen this before.
 2
              MS. STEINER: Let's have that marked the
 3
    next-numbered exhibit for identification purposes.
 4
                         (WHEREUPON, the
 5
                         previously-mentioned document was
                         marked for identification as
 6
 7
                         Exhibit Number 5.)
 8
    BY MS. STEINER:
               Were you aware that in 2018 that there was
         Q.
10
    a complaint of retaliation, fear of retaliation, or
11
    retaliation that was brought to your department by
12
    Dr. Meriwether and on behalf of Dr. Bailey?
13
              In 2018?
         Α.
1 4
              MS. STEINER:
                             Yes.
15
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
16
               THE WITNESS: I don't know of anything
17
    like that.
18
    BY MS. STEINER:
19
              Were you aware that a complaint was -- a
20
    complaint that there was a fear of retaliation was
21
    brought to your department by Dr. Meriwether or by
2.2
    anyone else on behalf of Dr. Bailey because he
23
    feared retaliation because of having to deal with
2.4
    the Coach Battle situation?
25
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
```

```
1
               THE WITNESS: Again, I wasn't involved in
 2
    the Coach Battle situation, so I don't know that I
 3
    knew that.
 4
    BY MS. STEINER:
 5
               In August of 2018, you were already at
         Q.
 6
    Metro schools, correct?
 7
         Α.
               Yes.
 8
         0.
               Were you the director of employee
    relations then?
10
         Α.
               Yes.
11
              Did you know then that as the
12
    administrative hearing was being conducted about
13
    Coach Battle and whether or not he kept his job or
1 4
    didn't keep his job, did you know that Dr. Bailey
15
    was in fear for his job and actually in fear for his
16
    safety?
17
              No, I did not know that.
         Α.
18
               Should that have been brought to your
19
    attention when you came in as the director of
20
    employee relations?
2.1
               I don't -- (Court reporter asks for
2.2
    clarification) I don't know.
23
              Do you have any job duty for investigating
24
    complaints of retaliation or discrimination filed
25
    with the EEOC?
```

- 1 Α. Those are handled through Metro legal. 2
 - Q. Okay.
 - And they work closely with Mr. Young. Α.
- 4 0. Do you know what the term "protected activity" means? 5
- 6 Α. Yes.

7

8

10

25

- Okay. And do you understand that that means you cannot be retaliated against for engaging in a complaint of discrimination, retaliation or whistleblower activity?
- 11 MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
- 12 THE WITNESS: Do I know that that's what
- 13 it means?
- 1 4 BY MS. STEINER:
- 15 Ο. Yes.
- 16 I know that that's part of the definition.
- 17 In the school year, from the time you got Q. 18 there, say August or would it have been July of 2018 19 through the end of the 2020 school year, can you 20 tell me any school principals who engaged in any
- 21 activity you would have considered protected?

concerns. But I don't recall.

I don't know. I don't know. 2.2 I mean, 23 principals make recommendations to us for actions 24 again employees. Principals have the right to raise

- Q. Meaning do you know of any principal who said there's discrimination or retaliation going on at Metro schools from the date you got there through the end of the 2020 school year?
- A. The ones that came into our department to investigate, but if you're asking me to list them, I can't list them.
- Q. Who came in your department to investigate?
- A. No, if they came in to our department to file a complaint, we would look into them and investigate.
- Q. Can you tell me the names of anyone who came into your department who was a principal, from the time you got there until the end of the 2020 school year to file a complaint?
- A. The only one I can recall I believe is the Pippa Meriwether, but I can't recall if there were others.
- Q. Do you recall any assistant principals making any complaint of discrimination from the time you got there until the end of the 2020 school year?
 - A. Yes.
 - O. Who?

1 4

2.2

25 A. It was somebody that was filing a

- complaint against Dr. Sharon Braden, but I can't remember the name of the individual.
- Q. Okay. Other than that, can you think of anyone else?
 - A. Not off the top of my head.

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- Q. Okay. Now, can you think of anyone from the end of the 2020 school year, the spring 2020 school year through today's date that was either a principal or assistant principal who filed a complaint of discrimination or retaliation against Metro schools?
 - A. Nothing is -- I can't recall.
- Q. Do you know of any principal whose contract has been nonrenewed by Metro schools since you've been there, other than Dr. Bailey?
- A. No, but that doesn't mean it hasn't occurred.
- Q. Okay. If there is an atmosphere of fear of retaliation at Metro schools, should that be -- should that be brought to your attention?
- A. I would say depending on the type of fear of retaliation, for what purpose, yes.
- Q. Did you know that in the prior

 administration at Metro schools, for instance,

 Dr. Joseph, did you know that there was an actual

1 fear of retaliation if someone should make a complaint of retaliation? 2 3 MR. FOX: Objection to the form. 4 THE WITNESS: So you're asking if I had 5 knowledge of? BY MS. STEINER: 6 7 Ο. Yes. 8 You know, knowledge of factual information, no. Knowledge of scuttlebutt, 10 knowledge of people saying things, I mean, I'm 11 always an advocate that I would ensure that I did 12 what I could to protect the confidentiality of all 13 parties. I would give them notice that if 1 4 retaliation occurred to please let me know and that 15 I would make sure that we would address it and 16 correct the situation. You know, I would like to 17 think that we support the school system to foster an 18 environment that's not -- that's free of all forms 19 of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, but like 20 I said, we are a small group of people, we focus on 21 protected class issues. I don't know that all of 2.2 those situations make it to us. 23 Okay. When you say, "scuttlebutt," was 24 there common knowledge around central office -- and 25 I assume you're in central office, correct?

A. It's called the support hub now, yes.

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- Q. And when you're in the support hub or central office, was it common knowledge around there that there was a fear of retaliation if you report something?
- A. I don't know that common knowledge is an adequate term.
- Q. Was there knowledge that if you report something, you will be retaliated against?
- A. So there is rumors, there's speculation, I don't know if what I was hearing was factual, truthful or if it was speculative or rumors.
- Q. But you did hear rumors that there was a fear of retaliation, correct?
 - A. What I would base my opinion on was if people came to me and said they feared retaliation.
- 17 Q. You heard that there were rumors of retaliation, correct?
 - A. I heard that people felt there were people that were untouchable, but I didn't witness or experience any of that.
 - Q. Did you hear that there was a fear by some of the workers that there was retaliation, if you said something, you would be retaliated against?
- 25 \mid A. I did not know that to be a fact.

- Q. Did you hear that? I'm not asking you if you knew it to be a fact. I'm asking you under oath, did you hear that there was a fear of retaliation if somebody complained of discrimination or hostile work environment?
- A. I don't know. Like I said, if I heard something, it would be from somebody I was interacting with in an investigation.
- Q. Did you hear, did you hear from anybody, any statement that implied to you that there was fear of retaliation at Metro schools?
- A. Like I said, I heard, but I didn't know whether it was rumor.
 - Q. Okay. So you did hear that there was --
 - A. Right.

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- 16 O. Is that correct?
- 17 A. It's possible that I heard it in the 18 course of an investigation.
- 19 Q. You did hear that there was a fear of 20 retaliation at Metro schools, correct? Yes or no?
 - A. You're putting words into my mouth. I think I'm telling you that if somebody came to me during the course of the investigation I was involved in and they feared retaliation, I would understand and note that. I heard that frequently

- when I interviewed people. Did I hear it generally or speculatively? I don't listen to that stuff, so I can't tell you whether or not I heard it from that.
- Q. Okay. I don't care if you don't listen to it, my issue is this. Can you tell me today under oath, and it sounds like you did, it sounds like you heard scuttlebutt out there that if you complained of retaliation or discrimination, you will be retaliated against at Metro schools?
- A. I think that there were people that feared retaliation, but don't ask me where I heard it from.
- Q. Did you know that the administration -- who was in charge of Metro schools when you came in there?
 - A. Dr. Shawn Joseph.
- Q. Did you know that Dr. Joseph recognized this fear and was trying to correct it?
 - A. No, I did not.
- MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
- 21 BY MS. STEINER:

1 4

Q. Did you hear any statements from anyone at
Metro schools that there is a fear by our workers
that they will be retaliated against and we need to
stop this?

- A. I don't remember hearing that.
- Q. Do you know of Metro schools, at any point in time, doing anything to assure its workers that they would not be retaliated against?
- A. Other than us saying that to them when they came to us with their concerns, having it in policy, having board policies that, you know, we try to foster environment free of all forms of harassment, discrimination and retaliation, other than that, I know that different departments have done cultural assessments to try to understand the concerns of the employees, but I don't know anything specifically to address that because it's very broad.
- Q. Do you think it's a good environment for an organization for its employee to have a fear of retaliation?
- 18 A. Do I believe it's a healthy environment
 19 for --
 - O. Yes.

1 4

- A. -- employees? I don't think it's a

 healthy environment for one employee to fear

 retaliation, but that's -- I can't make the general
 assessment for the entire district.
 - Q. When Metro schools went through the

```
1
    reorganization in 2020, did you realize that a high
 2
    percentage of the employees who were affected had
 3
    engaged in protective activity?
 4
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
              THE WITNESS: No. I would not know that.
 5
 6
    BY MS. STEINER:
 7
              Did you know that a statistician hired in
 8
    this matter said that it was very, very high
    probability that protected activity entered into the
10
    decision just because of the statistics?
11
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
12
              THE WITNESS: I did not know that.
                                                   I did
13
    not know that there was a statistician.
1 4
              MS. STEINER: Okay. I think that is it.
15
              MS. HARBISON: I just have a couple of
16
    questions.
17
              MR. FOX: Two questions?
18
    EXAMINATION BY MS. HARBISON:
19
         Ο.
              Ms. Zander, remind me of your new last
20
    name.
2.1
         Α.
              Munoz.
2.2
              Munoz. Congratulations. I represent Dr.
23
    Damon Cathey in this case, so there's five
24
    plaintiffs in this case, okay, and I represent Dr.
25
    Cathey.
```

My name is Jesse Harbison.

At the very beginning of your deposition, you said that in your interview that you were apprised or told that there were some things that were ongoing in the district; is that correct?

MR. FOX: Objection to the form.

THE WITNESS: I don't know if it was in the interview process or in, you know, when I was -- before I got here, but it was very general, mostly, nothing specific.

BY MS. HARBISON:

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2.4

- Q. What do you remember being told?
- A. I don't remember what I was told. I just remember that when I got here, what was told to me didn't adequately prepare me for what I encountered.
 - Q. Tell me what you encountered.
- A. It was just -- there was a lot of stuff going on in the district at the time. There were issues raised about principals, there was a lot of press involvement. It was just a very hectic time and for me to be trying to learn my job while dealing with a hectic environment was just very stressful.
- Q. What caused the hectic environment, what are you specifically talking about?

```
1
         Α.
              I think the fact that there was transition
 2
    in my department. There was me and one other person
 3
    and we were responsible for investigating
 4
    harassment, discrimination issues throughout the
 5
    district. At the time, it was just me and one other
             We had an assistant. Mr. Young was there,
    person.
 7
    as well, but basically it was two investigators.
 8
    And like I said, I learned under fire. You know,
    you just get inundated and you learned as you went.
10
              I came in with knowledge of
11
    investigations, I came in with experience of
12
    employee relations and different facets of employee
13
    relations, but not what was -- just -- I didn't -- I
1 4
    was not familiar with the school district and the
15
    publicness of everything in a school district.
16
    that was just something I had to acclimate to.
17
              Okay. Let's unpack that a little bit.
         Q.
18
    You had two investigators when you started with
19
    Metro, did you include you?
         Α.
20
              Yes.
2.1
         Q.
              And there's three now?
2.2
         Α.
              Correct.
23
         Q.
              Does that include you?
2.4
         Α.
              Yes.
```

Do you have the resources that you need to

25

Q.

be able to adequately do your job?

A. I would say it's feast or famine for us. We either get a high level of incidents and we're dealing with multiple cases, or there aren't a lot of issues. It ebbs and flows.

At times, it seems overwhelming, an overload, but we've gotten additional resources since I've been there, so I'm grateful for that, and that's why we try to restrict it to just protected class issues, because — and help, enable or basically impower the leaders to work through other employee issues; although, we help and guide and talk through different scenarios with leaders.

- Q. Let me tell you why I'm asking this question. Seems to me, I'm on the outside, right, that three investigators for 12,000-plus employees, possibly is not enough investigators for y'all to feel like you can actually investigate every claim that comes to you; is that accurate?
- A. Like I said, if we restrict it to just the protected class issues, we're in a better place.

 Does it mean that at times there's multiple things going on at the same time? Yes. But now we also have the Title IV division, and there are multiple investigators there, and so we have additional

resources with that group, but that's just recently formed.

2.

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- Q. Who made the decision to restrict your investigations to issues regarding protected classes?
- A. I have no idea, it was that way when I got there.
- Q. What is your understanding about what protected classes are?
- A. Anything that's in violation of Title VI,

 Title VII, Title IV, you know, and then our policies

 are actually a lot more -- anything having to do

 with race, ethnicity, sex, sexual harassment,

 harassment, based on any of those protected classes,

 ADA, religious. I mean, the list goes on. Sexual

 orientation, gender identity, et cetera. There's a

 multitude of protected classes.
 - Q. You may have answered this already, so forgive me if you have. But if someone comes to you and they've got an issue and it doesn't relate to a protected class, where do you send them?
- A. I review the concern. I may interview them to find out what the basis is of the complaint, and then I would work with the leadership, whether it's the principal at a school, the leader over the

principal of the school or the leader of the department where the incident is occurring to make sure that the issue is reviewed and resolved.

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- Q. Okay. I want to go back to something that you said when I first asked you a question, which was, there was a lot going on, it was very hectic when you first started, there was only two investigators, which isn't very many. What specifically can you remember, as far as specific situations, that were happening when you first started at MNPS, meaning do you specifically recall that there was an investigation about a person whose name you can remember, and, if so, do you remember what their name is? Like tell me specifically what was happening that made it hectic.
- A. I think the stuff going on with Mr. Sam

 Braden. I believe that was -- I think the -- a lot

 of things happening with the press, public records

 requests that came into our department as well, we

 had to respond to those things. It was a very

 tumultuous few months, so to be honest with you, I

 can't recall everything that was going on in that

 timeframe. But it just seemed like a lot that I had

 not encountered in my prior HR career.
 - Q. Do you remember the Sam Braden issue, do

you remember anything else specifically that was going on during that time that made it hectic?

1 4

A. Well, like I said, every time they did a public records request and somebody's information got shared, that would come to us, too. People would be upset that their information was out there. You know, we say we try to keep it confidential but we also say that we do the best we can, but we can't always guarantee it.

So working in a public environment, like I said, that was a transition for me. I've not worked in a public environment before.

- Q. Does your office handle public records requests?
- A. The -- we get requests for investigative information or personnel files. My admin will respond to personnel file or investigative file, stuff that we have.
- Q. Who asks you for those, is it someone within the district?
- A. Yeah, the communications department field all public records requests.
 - Q. Has anyone ever told you that it's a concern when a matter becomes fodder for the press?
 - A. I am concerned when a matter becomes

instinctually, you want to protect the people that have filed complaints or concerns, but, yet, in some regards, we don't have the ability to protect anyone, the public has access to all that kind of stuff.

1 4

2.2

- Q. If someone came to you -- well, let me ask it this way. If an employee came to you or something in your office and said that they feared they were being retaliated against or thought they were being retaliated against because they refused to remain silent about something that was happening that was illegal, and the illegal activity didn't have to do with a protected class, okay, would that be something that your office would investigate?
 - A. You have to give me an example.
- Q. Okay. Someone is falsifying student grades, someone is refusing to remain silent about a principal's falsification of grades and they fear they're being retaliated against or think they're being retaliated against, who would investigate that?
- A. That would be somebody -- you know, I would probably bring somebody in over -- actually, I did get involved in a situation with Dr. Cathey

regarding -- you know, it had to do with the online training system that they had for students, so Dr.

Cathey and I worked together at a school to try to get to the bottom and resolve the issues, who was at fault, who -- you know, if the grades were falsified or if the grades were inaccurately inflated or deflated, and it was really -- it was something that was out of my realm. I did assist him in that type of situation, but normally grades are handled at the executive director level or -- he was a community superintendent I think at the time, and we definitely would involve the testing group that oversees the testing. That's not my area of expertise.

1 4

Q. Okay. But is there a policy that if someone comes to you and complains about something that's illegal but it's not related to protected activity and they're scared they're going to be retaliated against or have been retaliated against because they're refusing to remain silent about something that's illegal, is there a policy written anywhere saying that you'll refer that person to someone else because that's outside of your department?

A. I usually have to collaborate. Those

1 aren't frequent occurrences. I would collaborate 2 with my boss and say, how do we handle this. 3 Because any claim that comes in or somebody has any 4 kind of fear, and, of course, anything that 5 compromises somebody's integrity or unlawful behavior, you know, that's of concern to me. 6 7 don't want to represent an organization that stands 8 for that. So I would do what I could to support it. 10 I don't know who I would -- it depends on what it 11 is, testing -- you know, if a principal is doing it, 12 then we bring it to the executive director to look 13 into. 1 4 The grade falsification, I'm going to 15 share my screen with you, was the grade 16 falsification that you were describing at Stratford 17 High School? 18 Α. Yes. 19 Ο. And did it involve Dr. Michael Steel? 20 Α. Yes. 21 Q. Okay. Can you see my screen right now? 2.2 Α. Yes. 23 Q. This says Investigative Summary Form at 24 the top, correct? 25 Α. Yes.

```
1
         Q.
              And it also says at the top right corner,
 2
    Submitted by Mary Ellen Zander, which was your
 3
    previous name, correct?
 4
         Α.
              Yes.
 5
              Does this look familiar to you, this
         Q.
 6
    investigative summary form?
 7
         Α.
              Yes.
         0.
              Did you draft this document?
              I did.
         Α.
              How did you get pulled into this
10
11
    particular case, or this particular issue, rather,
12
    because it seems a little outside your normal --
              I think it was -- I don't know how I got
13
         Α.
1 4
    pulled into it. I don't know if I was directed to
15
    support it. I don't know if Dr. Cathey asked for
16
    help and I assisted, because it was a pretty complex
17
    situation. I don't know how I got pulled into it, I
18
    just ended up being pulled into it.
19
         0.
              Sure.
                      This form, is this something that's
20
    used in all investigations, this investigative
21
    summary form?
2.2
              It was a template that was created by my
23
    former boss that was utilized, but now we don't
```

2.4

25

utilize this form.

Why not?

Q.

- A. Because it was hard to follow, sometimes it was more information than was necessary, so we kind of tried to streamline our process and it's more of a fact-finding summary. It's hopefully fewer pages than eight.
- Q. Did you conduct the actual investigation into the allegations of grade falsification by Michael Steele?
 - A. I interviewed individuals with Dr. Cathey. We both interviewed people together. I think he led them, I might have taken the notes.
- Q. At the top where it says, submitted by, who did you submit this to?
 - A. It would have been -- well, Dr. Cathey was part of the investigation, but the recommendations and everything would have gone to leadership over Dr. Cathey, I think, or my boss.
 - Q. Do you recall who that was at that time?
- 19 A. No.

2

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17

- Q. Okay. I'm going to scroll down and show you past the timeline.
- 22 A. Yeah, that's my favorite part.
- Q. Are you -- sometimes it doesn't read on the record, are you being sarcastic when you --
- A. Yes, I am.

- Q. I'm in control of the -- there you go.

 When you say it's my favorite part, is it just
 because it's long?
 - A. Yes. And detailed, and you're trying to put things into perspective, like when things occurred.
 - Q. But you're making a joke?
 - A. I was, I was.

1 4

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2.4

- Q. So we've got a court reporter here and so sometimes it's hard to tell.
- Do you recall that the outcome of this investigation was that Dr. Steele had a contract with students that they would get certain grades based on their effort as opposed to the actual mastering of material?
- A. I recall something about something that was signed. I don't know that it definitively substantiated Dr. Steele's direction to that nature. I think it might have been one of the assistant principals that was trying to organize something or put things into some kind of sense or -- I don't know if it led directly back to Dr. Steele or if it led to an assistant principal.
- Q. Well, let me show you something on here.

 Can you read this paragraph that I have highlighted

```
1
    just to yourself and let me know when you've had a
 2
    chance to read it.
 3
         Α.
              Okay.
 4
         0.
              Does this help refresh your memory about
    what happened?
 5
 6
         Α.
              Yes.
 7
              Okay. So what do you remember about this
 8
    situation regarding the contract?
 9
         Α.
               I remember seeing the contract.
10
         Q.
              Okay.
11
              Or seeing something that resembled a
         Α.
12
    contract. I think when Dr. Steele asked that they
13
    be approved to continue with the grading model, he
14
    was denied.
15
              Okay. He called an edgenuity employee and
16
    it said attempted to intimidate them into going
17
    along with his scheme, correct?
18
         Α.
               That's what it says.
19
         Q.
              Okay. Under recommendations and
    violations that occurred, it cites Tennessee Code
20
21
    Annotated 39-14-136, correct?
2.2
         Α.
              Yes.
23
         Q.
              Are you the person that determined that
2.4
    this was a violation of this statute?
25
              I'm not sure. I'm not intimately familiar
         Α.
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with all the statutes, but I used that book as a
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 2
    reference and may have had some guidance from
 3
    somebody in that arena.
 4
         Ο.
             Okay. And the recommendation was to
    follow the legal and policy requirements and
 5
 6
    misdemeanor up to and including reporting to the
 7
    Tennessee Department of Education and termination,
 8
    correct?
         Α.
              Yes.
10
              Did you collaborate with Dr. Cathey on
11
    this recommendation?
12
         Α.
              I believe so.
13
              And because you're the person that wrote
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    this, if -- do you have any reason to believe that
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    this is not accurate, this document?
16
               I believe it was accurate to the best of
         Α.
17
    our ability at the time.
18
              If it's in this document, that would be
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    something that was the result of your investigation,
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    correct?
2.1
         Α.
              Yes.
2.2
         Q.
              Okay.
23
              MS. HARBISON: I'd like to make this the
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    next-numbered exhibit.
25
              MR. FOX: No objection.
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1 (WHEREUPON, the 2 previously-mentioned document was 3 marked as Exhibit Number 6.) 4 BY MS. HARBISON: 5 Do you recall a law firm conducting an 6 investigation into human resources policies sometime in late 2018, early 2019? 7 Α. Yes. Do you recall that the outcome of that 10 investigation was that there were some human 11 resources practices, specifically regarding 12 investigations that were not adequate? 13 Α. I don't remember specifically the 1 4 findings. 15 Do you remember if anything was done after Ο. 16 that investigation concluded to change anything 17 within your department? 18 I don't know. I can't remember. I know 19 that there was some adjustments staffing-wise, may 20 have supported the addition of somebody else in our 21 department, but I can't remember exactly all the 2.2 things. I can't even remember the name of the 23 organization that did it. 2.4 Could it have been Bone McAllester? Ο. 25 Yes, that's the name.

Q. What staffing changes?

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- A. I -- it impacted the structure of my reporting, because they eliminated the person above me, and I reported directly to the chief after that. But that didn't happen right away, but it did happen like within months of that reporting.
 - O. Who was eliminated?
- A. Sharon Pertiller. She was executive officer of HR.
- Q. Any other changes that you can think of that happened as a result of that investigation?
 - A. I don't remember.
- Q. Do you know if anyone was disciplined as a result of that investigation?
 - A. I don't know. Like I said, I know that
 Sharon's position was eliminated, I know that
 Deborah Story retired around the same time. She was
 the chief HR officer. Tony Majors came in as the
 chief human resources officer, so there were some
 adjustments, but specifically I can't remember, you
 know, exactly what happened.
 - Q. Going back to the doctor -- well, actually let me ask this question first. Was there any training that you or anyone in your department underwent after that investigation concluded?

A. I can't think of any specific training that we underwent. It might have encouraged us to do some professional development, but I can't remember specifically.

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- Q. Going back to the Dr. Steele issue, was your role with regard to that issue simply as an investigator?
- A. No, unfortunately not. I was over the high school, and so when there was a recommendation for discipline, I also handled that. I also had to handle the reporting to the State, so I had multiple pieces that I was responsible for.
 - Q. How were you involved in the discipline?
- A. The recommendation comes to our department for the discipline by the executive director or maybe it was Dr. Cathey at the time, I can't remember who made the recommendation for discipline, and then we review the information to see if it's adequate for the level of discipline requested.

 Then I would bring that to my boss, which would be at the time, either Ms. Pertiller or Mr. Majors Dr. Majors, and we would evaluate what would happen based on the recommendation, and then it would go to Dr. Battle to review, or whoever the director of schools was at the time.

Q. Do you remember what recommendation came out of your office?

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- No, not specifically. I mean, we recommend that it be addressed, whether it's corrective or disciplinary action, the level, you At that time, I don't remember specifically what was recommended.
- Ο. Okay. Do you know that Dr. Cathey recommended that he be terminated due to the seriousness of the violation?
- Actually I -- when you say that, I think I recall him originally requesting termination.
 - 0. Did he request that to your office?
- The letter would come to us, his recommendation would come to us, but then ultimately the director of schools makes the decision.
- Were you present at the meeting between Q. Dr. Cathey and Dr. Battle where they discussed how Dr. Steele would be disciplined?
 - I don't remember if I was or wasn't.
 - Is that something that you would remember because Dr. Battle was there?
- 23 Α. Well, part of our process back then was to meet with Dr. Battle with the executive directors and the principals if the principals were making the

- recommendation, but that process has involved over
 the years. I'm not exactly sure when it changed.

 So we don't directly interact with Dr. Battle. It
 pretty much goes through the chief, although, we
 will draft documents and she'll review them, and if
 she still has questions, then, you know, kind of
 - But I don't remember being in a meeting, it doesn't mean I wasn't.

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goes back and forth.

- Q. Okay. Do you know that Dr. Battle did not take Dr. Cathey's recommendation to terminate Dr.

 Steele?
- 13 A. Yes, because Dr. Steele is still working
 14 for us.
 - Q. Do you know that information from any other source other than the fact that Dr. Steele is still working for Metro?
 - A. I think I might have had to been party to the drafting of the sending of the documents related to the discipline action, but I also was responsible for reporting it to the State, too, yes, I would know it through that process.
 - Q. Okay. And were you told what kind of discipline he would have after Dr. Battle decided not to terminate him? Let me ask a better question.

- 1 Did you have any -- after Dr. Battle made the 2. decision not to terminate him, did you have any input into how he would be disciplined in the 3 4 alternative? 5 Α. No. 6 Have you ever had to report someone to 7 the -- or have you ever had to report another 8 employee other than Dr. Steele for grade falsification? 10 No. Other types of testing infractions, 11 yes. 12 Who does it get reported to? Q. 13 It's the State Board of Education 1 4 Licensure Division. 15 Do you recall who else you had to report 16 to the Board of Education for testing infractions? 17 There was a teacher and -- not a proctor, Α. 18 but the coordinator, the testing coordinator at a 19 school that was reported. I believe it was last 20 year, but I can't remember the names. 2.1 Q. Do you remember what the substance of the 2.2 infractions were?
- 23 A. They allowed students to test remotely
 24 when they weren't supposed to. They went beyond the
 25 limit of timeframes allotted for testing, and it

- ended up being like 20 students' grades were voided,

 so that resulted in discipline for two individuals

 that I'm aware of.
 - Q. But that wasn't related to falsification of grades, correct? It was --
- 6 A. No.

4

- Q. Okay. Are you aware of anyone else that has had substantiated allegations of grade falsifications other than Dr. Steele?
- 10 A. No.
- Q. Okay. Why did it fall to you to report

 12 Dr. Steele to the Department of Education?
- 13 A. It's our department's responsibility to
 14 file the reports with the State. We initiate the
 15 reporting. They're actually submitted by a director
 16 of schools executive assistant, but we create the
 17 document because we deal with the discipline, so
 18 it's logical that they go hand in hand.
- 19 Q. But that doesn't have to do with protected 20 classes?
- A. No, it doesn't, but it's part of our function.
- Q. What other functions do you have that are outside of investigating allegations related to discrimination, harassment or retaliation related to

protected classes?

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A. So we -- we process admin leaves, which is any time somebody is put on administrative leave, to investigate whether it's a school level investigation or our level of investigation, or, you know, if it's an investigation that they're conducting up in Dr. Changas' office, which has to do with testing.

So we place them on administrative leave, we move them from administrative leave for certificated. For support, we do the same, but the supervisors for support employees can place them on administrative leave for up to three days' leave. We are the only ones who can extend it. So we do that.

We facilitate the discipline process, so if somebody is recommending suspension, demotion or termination, those come through our office. We review the documents to see if it's adequate to support that level of discipline or if the offense is egregious enough to warrant a level of discipline. We have interactive conversations with our leadership, and then ultimately it's the leader that determines the level they're going to recommend, but if it's a certificated employee, it's

the director of schools that has to support those decisions.

Q. Okay. Anything else?

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A. So discipline, investigations, I handled second level grievance -- second level grievance, and then I do some -- like if somebody has an injury on duty and they appeal it, they appeal it to me. Those aren't as frequent. Grievances aren't as frequent.

State board reporting, discipline, admin leave. We also facilitate training in our -- I don't want to be sarcastic here, but like when we can or when there's an opportunity, we like to take advantage of and facilitate training to leaders, whether it's regarding our processes, the administrative leave process, the discipline process, what we look for in terms of documentation to support actions that we promote in a developmental environment so that it's not a gotcha environment.

You know, we try to help leaders support the employees they have and develop the employees they have versus just look to terminate.

Q. You said a comment that you don't want to be sarcastic, is what you were going to say is that

you really don't have time to do that type of training?

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A. No. I think we have to make time to do that, because it's important and it's important that we get in front of the leadership and have those conversations, because that's the only time that they really open up and ask questions that they might be afraid to ask otherwise.

I think knowledge is power. I think if you give them knowledge, then they are better equipped to handle situations that they're being asked to handle at their level.

- Q. And that's to keep them from just terminating someone, for example?
- A. We want to encourage people to retain individuals that are obviously worthy of being retained and develop people. It's just a good practice. I mean, if you're in a developmental mode and you develop people and you support people, they'll be more successful, you'll be more successful versus the other alternative.
- Q. You said earlier that there were rumors that there were certain people that were untouchable. Who is rumored to be untouchable, whether you have personal knowledge about the truth

1 or the falsity of that or not? 2. MR. FOX: Objection to the form. The only person that I heard 3 THE WITNESS: 4 that about was Dr. Braden. Both Dr. Bradens, because they had been with the district for so long 5 that they felt that their claims would not be looked 7 into because they knew people, but that didn't 8 necessarily protect them, because we still had to look into it. I was not going to be deflected 10 because somebody said that they were protected 11 people. 12 BY MS. STEINER: 13 Is one of the people that was alleged to 1 4 have protected Dr. Braden, Dr. Battle? 15 I don't know who they protected. It was 16 just -- whether it was somebody on the board. 17 don't know. I don't know. I don't think Dr. Battle 18 was -- I don't remember what her role was at the 19 time that was all going on. 20 0. I want to make sure I'm clear on 21 something. You testified earlier about scuttlebutt 2.2 or rumors about fear of retaliation. 23 understanding about your testimony was that you were 24 saying, if it's not in front of me, there is nothing 25 I can do about it; is that correct?

A. If facts aren't presented that give me some substance to look into, it's hard to just go after a general feeling about something substantive to go after.

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- Q. Is it possible that people might be scared to come and complain if the fear is that they're going to be retaliated against if they do so?
- A. I believe that it creates an environment of a cycle, cyclical thing where people are afraid to talk, they don't talk. It's not an environment that I promote. I'm always going to encourage people to talk, because we can't fix anything if we don't know about it. I've never been deferred or discouraged from looking into something because it involved somebody that they felt might be, you know, whatever. I try to be as objective, fair-minded, and to keep the static out when I'm looking into things.
- Q. But it is possible that people may be scared to complain because of this environment, whether perceived or real, that they may be retaliated against, correct?
- A. If people perceive that, if their fear is real, then it probably does discourage them from doing things, but I can't speak to how everybody

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    processes that. If I were to tell you how many --
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    and I don't even know how many, but there is plenty
    of people that come to us and complain and I
 3
 4
    would -- I don't know, I mean, they say they fear
    retaliation because they complain, so it's our job
 5
    from that point forward to ensure that they're not,
7
    based on that situation. But people complain.
8
    don't know how real that is. I haven't seen it of
 9
    late, let's put it that way.
10
              Okay. Let's narrow in a little bit, okay?
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- It is possible, based on your years of experience, that if there is a culture that people are scared, that if they complain they'll be retaliated against, that there may be things that you don't know about that is going on because they might be scared to come to you to complain, right?
- A. That's probably a decent, speculative assumption --
- 19 Q. Okay.

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- A. -- that I try not to make.
- Q. Whose job would it be within Metro to investigate whether that is true or not?
- A. I don't know. I mean, I don't know how -
 I mean, I know that they've instituted some surveys,

 anonymous surveys that have given avenue to some of

assessments of departments, but overall is there a single unit that's responsible for that? I don't know. I think that logically they would say it resided in HR, but we aren't really structured so that we have that kind of capability to do cultural assessments of the population.

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Q. Do you even have the capacity to investigate things like that, meaning things that are not in front of you, based on facts coming from a person that has come to complain?

MR. FOX: Objection to the form.

I think we would do our best THE WITNESS: to investigate it, but I don't know. Depends on what is needed. We have partnerships with the different departments that help provide us with We don't do that ourselves. There's an audit data. department, so if there's financial things, there's a testing department. So if there's testing things, we have relationships with different organizational parts of the organization, so we would try to make sure it resides in the right place if something is addressing their concerns, but culturally when it's something broad like that, I don't know where that would reside.

BY MS. HARBISON:

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- Q. Okay. And to go back to my question, your department probably would not have the capacity to do anything about that because you only have three investigators, correct?
 - A. It would be very hard for us to.
- Q. Okay. If someone complains about retaliation, how do you determine whether or not they've been retaliated against?
- A. Well, it depends on if it's lawful retaliation or unlawful retaliation. Like people say they're retaliated against by being disciplined or held accountable, but they're being held accountable for a legitimate business reason.

 That's not retaliation if there's a legitimate business reason for the action taken.

Retaliation in terms of them participating in an investigation and then all of a sudden there's been some extra dose of correction or whatever, we would look into that.

But if it's -- you know, they're saying,

I'm being harassed and they're saying they're being

harassed, but in actuality they're being held

accountable because they're not showing up to work

on time. They say it's harassment, I say it's --

we're addressing your performance issues. So we have to make a determination when things come to us.

Q. Okay.

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MS. HARBISON: I don't have any other questions.

MS. STEINER: Did you have something?

MR. FOX: No.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. STEINER:

- Q. When you said that you investigate the discipline that's given to the principals, does that include discipline for performance reasons?
- A. I process the discipline, I look over documentation, I present that information to Dr. Battle. Ultimately, she decides what she can support and what she can't. She does expect us to kind of look at consistency factors across the district, so I think she processes things based on things that we present to her, but we coordinate and we administrate -- or coordinate is more likely an accurate terminology. We coordinate the gathering of the evidence and we present it.
- Q. Okay. So then if there is an issue with the performance of a principal, your department gathers the information and you coordinate and you present it to Dr. Battle?

- A. Well, if it's for a principal, their supervisor, their direct supervisor would be presenting that case. We're just the facilitator of the processes in that regard.
- Q. Okay. And as the facilitator, what do you do?
- A. We pull the data, the documentation together, the -- so say there's an executive director that's making a recommendation for a suspension, we ask them what levels of corrective action or disciplinary action occurred prior, if there's any other documents that they addressed for performance issues, we'd ask for all the documentation leading up to the point. Or if they did an investigation and their findings were such that warranted significant action, we would just pretty much pull all that stuff together, you know, kind of coordinate whether or not there's a open DCS case, whether or not law enforcement is investigating, to just understand all the aspects of it before it's presented to Dr. Battle.
 - Q. And that includes job performance of principals, correct?
- 24 A. Yes.

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Q. Did you do that for Dr. Bailey's case?

A. I did not.

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- Q. Do you know of anyone in your department who did an investigation, pulled everything together and coordinated it for presentation to Dr. Battle?
- A. Well, that -- my understanding was that it was a nonrenewal, so we're not involved in that.

 That's handled by the HR manager hiring managers.
- Q. Okay. And who is the hiring manager for Dr. Bailey?
 - A. I don't know who handled that.
- Q. So if you're recommending someone for discipline, and that includes job performance, would that be a nonrenewal for job performance?
 - A. Yes.
- Q. Okay. So then if someone is being nonrenewed and it's job performance related, it needs to go through your department?
- A. No. I'm sorry. You misunderstood that.

 If they're nonrenewals for job performance, those are evaluated through the budgeting process. You know, they're suggesting somebody for nonrenewal.

 They will ask if there are folks that have issues or they'll ask us if we have documentation supporting a nonrenewal for individuals, but other than that, we're not involved in that process, the nonrenewal

1 process. 2 Eligibility, non-eligibility, usually if it's a budget restructure, or say a closing of a 3 school, they would be eligible for rehire. 4 5 was performance based, it's possible they would be non-eligible for rehire. 6 7 If it's performance based and not eligible 8 for rehire, they've lost their job, correct? Α. Correct. 10 Now, did anyone ask you for documentation 11 about Dr. Bailey? 12 Α. No. 13 Okay. Have you looked in his employee Q. 1 4 file by any chance? 15 Α. I have not. 16 Should documentation such as -- what Ο. 17 documentation would be available for a principal; do 18 you know? 19 Well, I think their contracts, their 20 annual contracts, if there were performance issues 21 addressed, they should be there. If there were --2.2 what do they call it, individual IPPs, which are 23 individual performance plans, those would be there. 24 If they were involved in an investigation that

might -- like any kind of response letter might be

- there, or an admin leave, written reprimands, but all their hiring documents, all that kind of stuff is in there, too.
 - Q. So any written reprimand, any IPP, any oral counseling, any performance issues should be noted in their employee file?
 - A. Oral counselings may not reside in their employee personnel file. They might just be in what we call a site file. So they don't make it to the personnel file until it's a written reprimand or above.
- Q. Okay. But all these, the oral counseling actually is put into some sort of a written document form where you can add it to the file if it continues?
- A. Yes.

1 4

- Q. And all of these things that we've discussed, the IPP, the investigation, should all be put in the employee file?
- A. Yes, in different sections.
- Q. Okay. And should an investigation of discrimination or harassment be put in the employee file?
- A. The investigation itself would be in an investigative file. It doesn't necessarily go in

the person's employee file.

Q. Okay.

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- A. Unless there's a response that goes in their file.
- Q. Okay. Now, when you're in one of those time periods where you're getting a lot of different complaints coming in, such as in the Braden matter, do you feel a bit overwhelmed in your department?
- A. I think it's tense. I think when there's a lot of demands, anything that involves people and knowing that when they're doing public records request that people's lives will be impacted by publication of information. I think that's stressful to me personally.
- Q. When you said in the Braden matter there were -- it was expressed to you that some of the employees thought Dr. Braden knew people and so they couldn't complain against him, was that because they felt they would be retaliated against?
- A. I think that people inferred that that's what Dr. Braden would say to them to keep them from complaining on him. I don't know that -- I never knew who he knew that would protect him.
- Q. Did you know that he was pretty close with Dr. Battle?

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              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
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              THE WITNESS: I don't know their history.
 3
    I believe they may have worked together.
                                               She's been
 4
    with the district a long time, he was with the
 5
    district a long time, but I don't know that
 6
    relationship at all.
    BY MS. STEINER:
 7
 8
         Ο.
              Did you know that he taught her?
              No, I did not.
         Α.
              Did you know she had made statements that
10
11
    he was not quilty of anything he was accused of?
12
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
              THE WITNESS: I would not know.
13
1 4
    BY MS. STEINER:
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              Did your department do any sort of
16
    investigation about whether or not the individuals
17
    who complained about Braden had been retaliated
18
    against?
19
              I believe that there were a multitude of
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    complaints regarding Dr. Braden. And I'm not sure
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    if it went to retaliation or not.
                                        I think it
2.2
    possibly did, but I can't remember specifically.
23
         Q.
              Okay.
2.4
              MS. STEINER: That's all.
25
               FURTHER THIS DEPONENT SAITH NOT
```

1	REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION			
2				
3	STATE OF TENNESSEE)			
4	COUNTY OF DAVIDSON)			
5				
6	I, Janie W. Garland, LCR#111, licensed court			
7	reporter, in and for the State of Tennessee do hereby			
8	certify that the above deposition was reported by me			
9	and that the foregoing pages of the transcript is a			
10	true and accurate record to the best of my knowledge,			
11	skills, and ability.			
12				
13	I further certify that I am not related to nor			
14	an employee of counsel or any of the parties to the			
15	action, nor am I in any way financially interested in			
16	the outcome of this case.			
17				
18	I further certify that I am duly licensed by the			
19	Tennessee Board of Court Reporting as a Licensed			
20	Court Reporter as evidenced by the LCR number			
21	following my name below.			
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2 4	Janie W. Garland, LCR#111			
25				

1				
2	ERRATAPAGE			
3				
4	£		ary Ellen Zander, having read the	
5	certif	y said te	sition, Pages 1 through 132, do hereby estimony is a true and accurate	
6	transc	cript, wit	th the following changes (if any):	
7	PAGE	LINE	SHOULD HAVE BEEN	
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asteiner steinerandsteiner.com

EXHIBIT

Service

Consider

S-4-22

S-4-23

From:

Bailey, James K < James. Bailey@mnps.org>

Sent:

Wednesday, June 24, 2020 3:41 PM

To: Subject:

Ann Steiner- Attorney Fwd: Formal Complaint

Please see below!

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Zander, Mary Ellen" < Mary Ellen. Zander@mnps.org>

Date: June 24, 2020 at 3:14:19 PM CDT

To: "Bailey, James K" <James.Bailey@mnps.org>
Co: "j_kbaily@comcast.net" <j_kbaily@comcast.net>

Subject: RE: Formal Complaint

Dr. Bailey,

Attorney, Kevin Klein is an outside investigator that will be investigating your concerns. He will likely be reaching out to you once he initiates his investigation.

Thank you,

Mary Ellen Zander

Director of Employee Relations
Metro Nashville Public Schools
2601 Bransford Ave
Nashville, TN 37204
Office: 615.259.8440 Ext. 858440
MaryEllen.Zander@mnps.org

Leadership Employee Relations Docs



Belief | Arranger | Responsibility | Relator | Individualization

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From: Zander, Mary Ellen

Sent: Tuesday, June 16, 2020 4:29 PM

To: Bailey, James K < James. Bailey@mnps.org>

Subject: RE: Formal Complaint

Importance: High

Good afternoon Dr. Bailey,

Thank you for sharing your concerns. MNPS takes all concerns of this nature very seriously and will be looking to conduct a formal investigation. Because of the nature of your complaint, it will be handled outside of MNPS HR department. I am still working to identify the investigator. As soon as that individual is identified, I will let you know.

Thank you,

Mary Ellen Zander

Director of Employee Relations
Metro Nashville Public Schools
2601 Bransford Ave
Nashville, TN 37204
Office: 615.259.8440 Ext. 858440

Office: 615.259.8440 Ext. 858440 MaryEllen.Zander@mnps.org

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From: Bailey, James K < James. Bailey@mnps.org>

Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 9:58 PM

To: Zander, Mary Ellen < MaryEllen.Zander@mnps.org>

Cc: j kbaily@comcast.net Subject: Formal Complaint

June 15, 2020

Mary Ellen Zander, Director of Employee Relations:

Please accept this written notice as my formal complaint of retaliation, age and race discrimination against Dr. Adrienne Battle. The retaliation is based upon my participation in the Director of Schools', Dr. Adrienne Battle's, brother's disciplinary disposition. The age discrimination is based on me being removed from my position as Principal at Whites Creek High School. Although Dr. Battle alleges that my removal was due to the district's reorganization and budget impact, she is replacing me with someone that is not in a protected age group for my same role. On May 1, 2020, in my meeting with Dr. Chris Barnes, Chief Human Resources Officer, he stated that because I had been at Whites Creek High School for several years they were making a change, yet there are other white high school principals that have been at their schools even longer that were not removed.

Additionally, rumors have been swirling around that I got her brother fired. However, any disciplinary action at that level comes at the recommendation of the Director of Schools. It is my understanding that those allegations against me were also included in Scott Lindsey's complaint and open records request. Keep in mind that Scott Lindsey, former Executive Director of Employee Relations, was the one that was having conversations with Dr. Adrienne Battle's husband, Dr. Darren Kennedy, when the

Carlton Battle investigation was active. Although Scott Lindsey was not assigned to the investigation, Dr. Darren Kennedy was calling me and telling me that Scott Lindsey told him that I had requested an audit of her brother and was trying to get him, Carlton Battle, fired. Although I did not realize that Scott Lindsey was friends with Dr. Battle or Dr. Kennedy, I knew the information regarding the audit and other aspects regarding the investigation Dr. Kennedy was sharing with me was accurate; however, Scott Lindsey should not have been discussing an active case with him per MNPS policy. Shortly after Dr. Battle was officially appointed as the Director of Schools on March 13, 2020, my fear of retaliation became a reality. As a result of the harassment from Dr. Battle's husband and repeated threats from one of the Battle family friend, I had to seek medical attention. Obviously, that fear of retribution and retaliation was real and I am still under a physician's care to this day.

Last, in a letter signed by Dr. Battle states that if I had not secured another position by June 15, 2020, that I would be placed in a classroom teaching position for the 2020/2021 school year. Although I was encouraged to apply for other positions, I never received a call until I sought legal counsel. I did not even get a courtesy call or any type of response for my application for the EDSSI position. Nor had I received any type of response for my Assistant Principal or Principal application for McGavock High School until I sought legal representation. While out on bereavement leave, this past Saturday, June 13, 2020, I received the first response from HR, Lisa Spencer-- Executive Director of HR-- via email. Ms. Spencer was attempting to schedule me for an interview for today, June 15, and I am still out on bereavement leave. Although that communication was not timely, how would anyone expect me to be at my best? How could I be my best self after what Dr. Battle has taken me through, along with the lack of professional courtesy regarding the scheduling of the interview? Again, as soon as Adrienne was appointed as the Director of Schools on March 13, 2020, she wasted no time in retaliating against me for my involvement in her brother's investigation, and the district HR team allowed her to discriminate against me based on my age and race by appointing someone younger with less experience and not subjecting the white principals to the same humiliation because of the length of their assignments. As result of these actions, my last day with the district will be June 30, 2020.

Respectfully,

Dr. James K. Bailey